

Auction High-Lights
with
A Full Exposition of
The Nullo Count

Florence Irwin



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By Florence Irwin

The Fine Points of Auction Bridge

The Development of Auction Bridge under
the New Count

Auction High-Lights

With a Full Exposition

of

The Nullo Count

By

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"The Development of Auction Bridge."

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PREFACE

THE world moves fast, and the Auction world is not a step behind the rest of it. There is needed, therefore, a further chronicle of the recent growth and development of the game. If you want to be up-to-date, your Auction, like your motor-car, must be "this year's model."

It gives me distinct pleasure to be able to say that in these pages I do not find myself obliged to alter, or contradict, a single statement made in either of my former books, *The Fine Points of Auction Bridge*, and *The Development of Auction Under the New Count*. Numerous questions were under discussion when I wrote them; but, in each instance, I was sufficiently fortunate to take a position which time has justified, and from which there has been no occasion to retreat. Nor do I repeat here any of the information which I have given before. I merely record the growth of Auction and the additional matter which a year has brought forth. My previous books form the base of which this is the super-structure.

Preface

Much of my material has already appeared in *The New York Times*. The test-hands have been sent me from all parts of this country and several of them came from Europe. I have selected those which have aroused the greatest interest and discussion amongst readers of *The Times* on both sides of the ocean.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first book to treat of "Nullos." "Nullos" form the latest and most absorbing question in the Auction world to-day, and the demand for "a book about them" would, in itself be sufficient reason for the presentation of this little volume.

F. I.

Hastings-on-Hudson,
October, 1913.

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CHAPTER I

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Two great questions have recently shaken the Auction world. Taken in chronological order, they are "High Spades" and "Nullos." Placed in accordance to the degrees of their importance, I should unhesitatingly reverse that order.

To the fascinating subject of "nullos," I shall devote a later chapter. "High spades" I have already discussed in an earlier book, but I have a few additional words to say. By "high spades," I mean all spade-bids higher than two—"three spades," "four spades," "five spades," "six spades," and "seven spades."

It is obvious, at the outset, that such bids are, of necessity, *false* bids. No sane person would bid three, four, five, six, or seven spades, and mean what he said. If he had a good spade-

suit, he would, of course, be bidding it as "royals." The high-spade bids are therefore a system of set artificial bids.

The bid of "one spade," to show a poor hand, is a necessary result of the dealer's forced bid. If he *must* bid, and *cannot* bid, it would be ridiculous to demand that he bid legitimately. If he does not hold the material for a legitimate bid, he certainly cannot make one. By *forcing* him to bid on a hand which does not warrant it, we drive him to the only defense possible,—a bid which is the lowest one he can possibly make, which shows on its face that it means nothing (else he would bid "a royal"), and which gives his partner the least possible difficulty in extricating him. As long as the dealer's forced bid remains, the bid of "one spade" on a poor hand must also remain. It is not illegitimate; it is merely defensive.

The bid of "two spades" has existed as long as Auction. It was a necessity under the old count, and became too much a matter of habit to be dropped when we adopted the new count. Although I do not use it, and do not consider it necessary any longer, yet I should never dream of trying to dislodge it from its vantage-place in the affections of Auction players. I shall devote a later chapter to its proper use. *It is,*

according to my opinion, the only conventional call for which there is the slightest excuse.

Long ago, the great game of Whist was nearly strangled by the complicated "systems" put forward by various would-be authorities. Nothing but a strong reversion toward simplicity saved it. Artificiality almost dealt its death-blow. Let us not deliver Auction into the hands of the Philistines!

Three months prior to the launching of the tabulated "high-spade" bids, several of those bids came to me from a source entirely different from the one which eventually sponsored them. They were told me more as a joke than as anything else; the men were using them occasionally at the clubs, but laughing while they used them. I mentioned them to my classes and in the columns of *The Times*, but not seriously—because I did not consider them a thing to recommend. I have never changed my mind about that!

I am told that several years ago, the exact "five-spade" bid of to-day (when bid over an adverse suit-bid) made its first appearance in a book of the day. *It was tried as long ago as that, evidently found wanting, and abandoned!*

In playing with persons from other countries, I find constant relief and approval when I say that

I play entirely without artificial conventions. It would be impossible to establish any one artificial system universally; if one is permitted, thousands may arise. A couple of hours' conversation on the subject of "systems" would not be too much to establish a mutual comprehension between two prospective partners who had never met before, and who came from different localities. Is that desirable?

It is not my intention to explain all the "high-spade" bids here; I have done that in a previous book. The players who sponsor them do not stop at high spades. They have also an elaborate system of suit-bids—showing combinations that call for opening-bids of one, two, and three, respectively. Taking it all in all, there are seventeen artificial conventions. Seventeen totally unnecessary burdens to carry (for who will deny that good team-work existed between partners before these conventions arose?)! Seventeen stumbling-blocks placed in the path of sane and natural bidding! And with no ultimate change of results to warrant them! If four players all use these conventions, they cannot *all* play more hands by this combining of cards. If one pair of partners gets one desirable declaration as the result of a jack-suit "call," their adversaries will capture the next

desirable declaration by precisely the same means. Thus everything is equalized, the Mecca is not attained, and *the ultimate result remains the same though the beauty of the game is lost in attaining it.*

I have seen players who thought themselves extremely important and well-posted because they knew all these seventeen conventions. Why? I learned them in a half-hour; any average player can do the same. Can you not commit a poem to memory? Or a rôle in a play? Or a set form of rules on any subject? I am sure you have all done that many times and thought nothing of it. I can play "high spades" at one table half the evening, and then go for the other half to another table and dispense with them and be glad of the change. It is like saying your little pre-arranged speech or poem, or *not* saying it. That is all!

I have spoken of "capturing desired declarations" by making conventional "calls" on jack-suits; those are the happy occasions when your partner's hand fits your demands and he responds as you desire. But think, oh think, of those awful (and numerous) times when his hand does *not* fit! When he has absolutely no material on which to respond, yet does not

dare to pass! Those are the times, the awful times, when the fallacy of the conventions is shown up.

Suppose you have six spades to the jack and but one other possible trick in your hand; I say that it is far safer to bid "a spade," than to call for royals by bidding "four spades." With a hand such as yours, your partner must have general strength, or a good suit, to get you out of your call (by which you are committed to a contract for *four-odd tricks*). If he has general strength, or a good suit, let him be the one to make the declaration. If he has neither, you are both in a box, and put there by your opening declaration. Oh, the "calls" that I have seen fail, *provided the adversaries have had sense enough to pass!*

There is the crux! No adversary should ever be sufficiently obliging as to bid against a conventional call. Let the partner of the conventional bidder be the one to relieve the situation! Sometimes it does not inconvenience him, and then the adversaries can bid later. Sometimes it inconveniences him seriously—and that is the adversaries' chance for penalties. *Never bid against an adverse conventional bid. Wait till the partner has lifted that burden!*

The success of conventional bids depends largely on the bids of the adversaries. If each player is so anxious to bid that he would rather mention a little two-penny suit (by which he may manage to score six, or twelve), than leave his adversary "in" with a false bid, then the conventional bids are not a serious inconvenience to their makers and to the partners of those makers. But suppose a dealer opens with a conventional call on a jack-suit; suppose the adversaries hold all the high cards in that suit and every other, and are blessed with sense enough to hold their tongues! Then what about the dealer and his partner?

The success of conventional bids depends largely upon the inability of the adversaries to hold their tongues. Grant them the wisdom to do this, and you number the days of the conventional bid!

Let me illustrate by a few particular instances. Some show how dangerous, and others how unnecessary, are conventional calls.

Z dealt and made the royal-call of "four spades," on this hand:

♥	A 7 6
♣	9 5
♦	7 3
♠	J 9 8 6 5 3

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That, you see, is a perfect royal-call—if you use calls: six spades to the jack, and an outside ace. It is the kind of hand that conventional bidders consider “too good to waste.”

A was wise enough to “pass” on these cards:

♥	K 5 2
♣	6 4
♦	Q 10 5
♠	A Q 10 7 2

A could bid “a royal,” or he could bid “a no-trump”—but why should he? All the conventional bidders I have met would take it for granted that any player holding A’s cards would bid against a royal-call. This A did n’t. He saw Z with a ten-trick contract that he could n’t possibly keep; to beat it was worth fifty a trick for all tricks over three; to bid royals was to make nine a trick for every trick over six. The thing is not to play the most hands—it is to make the most you can on your cards. A might have doubled, but it would have been useless, for no conventional bid stands. He had the chance of his life—he took it and left the responsibility up to Y.

Y held this lovely combination (and his bid was demanded):

♥	9 8 4 3
♣	Q 10 8 7 3
♦	J 9 8 2
♠	—

Was n't that an enviable position? Anything he attempted was doomed to failure.

If Y allowed "four spades" to stand A-B could make 400. That, you see, is better than bidding and going game—even with a slam! It is better than two games—150 points better than a rubber!

And if Y made a bid, as of course he must, it would be heavily defeated. B's hand, you see, held these cards:

♥	Q J 10
♣	A K J 2
♦	A K 6 4
♠	K 4

Suppose Y tried a bid of "two clubs." B could double and make 500—the value of two rubbers. Hearts and diamonds would also be disastrous, and Y could hardly be expected to

say "a royal" without a spade in his hand. If he did, B might bid and relieve the situation for him; but if B passed A could break the rule against doubling one-bids—he could double the royal, because he could see that Z-Y were in a desperate strait and could be defeated at anything.

I have repeatedly seen similar situations! Try passing the high conventional bids when your adversaries make them; let your own bid wait over till the second round, no matter how good it looks; if the third hand bids you will have your chance to bid over him, and the third hand is absolutely forced to bid.

One of the worst points about conventional bids is that they absolutely presuppose luck—the luck that your partner may hold what you want him to hold. Granting luck, you can win with high spades or without them; failing luck, you are far safer without them.

Here is another hand that shows how easily the "five spade" bid can be dispensed with. The dealer opened with "one no-trump," on the following hand:

♥	9 5
♣	A Q J 7 6 4
♦	A K Q
♠	A K

Second hand and third hand passed, and fourth hand said "two hearts." This killed no-trump for the dealer, because he did not stop hearts. The stock conventional bid for a situation where you want to play no-trumps but fail to stop the adversary's suit is "five spades." To begin with, the bid is inadequate,—which only goes to show that it is impossible to form a table of stock bids that will always bridge over difficult situations; you might as well stop before you begin. But this dealer did not use conventional bids anyhow; he would not have bid "five spades" even if it had been possible. See how he handled the matter! He said "three clubs,"—showing that he was perfectly willing and able to play that bid, but that the heart-bid had killed his no-trumper. But the point is that *his bid was legitimate and meant what it said; he could be left with it, and could play it.*

Second hand passed again, and the dealer's partner, having the hearts twice stopped, over-called with "two no-trumps." Thus perfect concerted action was attained independently of any false bids.

This is only one of the many positions that may arise. *But to all of them there are solutions that will be very evident and very satisfactory to the expert player,—and which will give far more*

scope to his subtlety than will the use of false bids made in set forms of words quite foreign to the meaning they convey.

I say that there are always ways to solve these difficulties; ways that are delightfully delicate and that require thought and skill. In comparison with them the dull use of a set speech prepared by some one else and repeated like a parrot seems singularly primitive, artificial, and devoid of personal thought.

There is another point about conventional calls; they give a "photograph" of the bidder's hand to two adversaries and only one partner. The advantage of this specific information to clever adversaries, *who are wise enough to pass and to take advantage of what they have been told*, is sometimes very great. Witness this proof:

Z dealt and made the "royal-call" of "four spades." A was wise enough to pass; he held some clubs and a singleton king of spades. Y (third hand) could n't pass, yet he did n't care to bid royals; he held the three smallest spades in the pack, and knew that his partner lacked the ace and king, possibly even the queen. He had a much better line of hearts than his partner had of royals, and his hearts were better as trumps than as side suit, because they were long and scattered; with a short, compact suit of

hearts, Y would have used them as a side suit to the royals; but with six scattered hearts that dropped from the ace-jack, he felt that they should be trumps. He bid "two hearts."

B sat fourth, with the king—queen—small of hearts, and four spades headed by the ace and queen. He knew that Z must have made his opening "call" on a jack-suit, and he reasoned that if Y had held an honor in the suit he would have responded to the call. He therefore placed the king in A's hand—and rightly. He led a small spade to that king, a thing he would never have dreamed of doing, failing Z's opening call. A took with his singleton king and led a club, which B took with the ace. B then led his ace and queen of spades, on which A discarded two losing diamonds, first the nine and then the six, to show he had no more. B immediately led a low diamond which A trumped and led trumps through Y, enabling B to make both his king and queen. Thus the bid of "two hearts" was set, simply because of the information furnished to B by Z's opening royal call. It positively denied the king of spades. Had Z opened with "a spade," A would have passed and Y would have bid "one heart," but B would never have led as he did. No one leads a small card from ace-queen and two small as an original lead.

Failing that lead, A would never have made his singleton king and would not have been able to discard his two losing diamonds.

That, you see, is the reverse side of the picture. By endeavoring to give his partner specific information (that proved valueless after all), Z gave his adversaries a tremendous advantage.

But it is in the name of sportsmanship that I voice my chief objection to set calls. From time immemorial it has been conceded that in a card game "specific information by word of mouth" should be barred. Such information is supposed to be given by the play of cards; that calls for skill, and it also demands that the necessary cards shall be held. There is always the sporting chance that they are lacking, and then it is a play of wits to counteract that lack. Nothing but sudden paralysis of the tongue could inconvenience the player who announces his combinations by speech.

Of course, when you lead a king it means you hold the "ace, the queen, or both." But that information is given by the *play of cards*. There is also the chance that you are leading "short." Of course, again, when you bid "a heart," your information is conveyed by word of mouth, but it is not specific. Your suit may be headed by the ace, or king, or both, or (possibly) neither;

it may be short and strong, or long and scattered. You are giving no "photographs." *And you are able and willing to play your bid!*

How would you like a system by which a bid of "*one* heart," would mean "partner, I am headed by the ace," and a bid of "*a* heart," would mean "partner, I am headed by the king?" How would that appeal to your sporting instincts? Yet it would be quite fair if all four players understood the signal. But would n't it strike you as rather flat? That is the way conventional bids always strike me.

I ranged myself against them in the beginning, and have never had the slightest cause to regret my position. They are played locally,—notably in the city of their birth. I do not believe that they will ever be universal, or even that they will spread greatly. I know a number of players who were rather taken with them at first, who have now discarded them entirely. The proportion of well-known experts who are ranged against them is tremendous. At one time I considered them a serious menace, but they worry me no more.

At the time when the discussion of conventional bids was raging, I was opposing them in the columns of *The New York Times*. I received hundreds of letters congratulating me on the

position I had taken, and hundreds of criticisms of the new bids. One person after another, one letter after another, reiterated the opinion: "That is n't the way to play Auction!" I have chosen a few extracts from these numerous letters which I append here.

The first was from Boston: "If ever there was a timely discussion invited, it is the question of the new form of bidding. At our club it is difficult to tell whether one is playing Auction or football—the signals gradually getting to be about equal. I strongly advocate the cutting out of all signals. . . . It is up to you and the other Auction writers to advise decisive action now, as otherwise you will have independent rules made by clubs. In our club we are considering the posting of a notice that signal bids shall not be allowed. All our best players are disgusted with the way the game is going, and feel disposed to cut away from the rule writers. Therefore, help the cause along!"

This came from New York: "I was very much interested in your discussion of the proposed spade conventions in *The Times*. I am heartily in sympathy with your attitude in the matter, and my vote on the matter is the same as yours.

From New Bedford: "You may put down our

circle here, 'as agreeing with you about the high-spade bids. We have used four of them constantly and while they averaged fairly well, not sufficiently well to tack on to a game that is sufficient unto itself. If Auction keeps advancing (?) I, for one, am going back to tiddledywinks. . . . The more there is *of* it, the less there is *to* it."

From Connecticut: "You are quite right. Discard the whole outfit of conventions, and make it a real game."

From New Jersey: "Our coterie has been testing the high-spade bids, and beg to agree with you, 'dispense with all of them.' Your lucid discussion might well tempt to that final verdict."

This correspondent went on to speak of the frequent inconvenience caused to the partner of the player using the high-spade calls.

"I desire to submit what I consider the logical development of the conventional spade bid; if this is to remain a feature of the game, the latter is surely in its infancy, and it were well for us to hasten the evolution to its destined issue.

"There are five suits. If we have a 'make' in any of these, we declare it. But if we have not,

we may have an 'assist' for one of them; or we may have a hand that is an 'assist' for two of the five . . . That is, we may hold, besides definite makes in the five suits, any one of fifteen possible combinations. If we discard the club assist, and the diamond assist, as being of least value, we still have thirteen different hands requiring signals, or conventional bids. . . . Thirteen, or even fourteen, conventional bids! This cannot fail to satisfy the most ardent supporter of the new game. I almost fear that the advancing of this suggestion may cause the more fanatical devotees of the conventions to seize upon it seriously as the ultimate solution of their problem.

"The game of Auction is much too interesting to be mutilated in its simplicity by a complicated system of 'wigwagging'—a system evolved for the purpose of allowing 'better' bidding! How absurd! And if it is logical to have such a system it is perfectly logical to develop it as above, to cover all possible combinations. I really wish that my suggestion would be seized upon, because I believe that it would soon show the absurdity of conventional bids, and cause them to die a natural (but accelerated) death.

"Perfection in combining hands is easily attained by laying all the cards on the table, and

the conventional bid is a positive step toward that ideal (?)!"

Is n't that delightful? And logical? And conclusive?

I could continue indefinitely to pile testimony upon testimony against the use of the high-spade bids, but I will close with what I consider one of the best quotations I have ever seen on this subject. It was in a booklet sent me by a member of the National Club, Toronto:

"David Harum's maxim. 'It is a good idea to be willing to let the other fellow make a dollar once in a while,' is as useful in Auction bridge as it is in a horse trade."

CHAPTER II

NULLOS

AUCTION has justly been called “a game of aces and kings.” No matter what degree of skill you may possess, you cannot win if Fate insists on giving you all the poor cards; you may see the victories going to players whom you know to be your inferiors, and you will have to admit that all the skill in the world is no match for luck. Of course, with skill you make more on good cards and lose less on bad ones; but you cannot beat luck.

This is discouraging, and it is the one blot on an otherwise perfect game. For some time we have felt that there was a certain lack in what has been aptly called “the defensive side of the game.” We have longed for a means to discount luck and to give skill its proper chance.

Of all non-athletic games, I suppose that Chess is the most perfect for the reason that it is 100 per cent. skill and no per cent. luck. It depends on no throwing of dice or dealing of

cards, no outside element of chance exists and the outcome of the game lies solely and entirely with the skill of the players.

Roulette, on the other hand, is 100 per cent luck and no per cent skill; but I do not think that any one would claim much mental stimulus for Roulette; excitement there is, naturally, and the chance of "getting something for nothing," and that is all.

I once read an article by an Englishman who attempted to place the percentage of luck and skill in various games. To Baccarat he allowed 2 per cent skill to 98 luck; and for "Whist, Bridge, and all their children," the percentage was placed at 20 for skill and 80 for luck. Personally I should place it at 40 for skill and 60 for luck; a few players of my acquaintance (who, by the way, are proverbially good holders), reverse these figures, making it 60 for skill to 40 for luck; and the general run of persons whom I have asked put it at 50 and 50.

In any event, it is certain that the luck percentage is too high; to spend hours in thought and practice, to use every effort to perfect your game, and then to be forced to yield all your advantage simply because aces and kings refuse to come your way, is extremely discouraging, to put it mildly.

Any innovation which tends to increase the advantage of skill and to decrease the advantage of luck should be welcomed by Auction lovers; any movement toward equalizing the value of the cards would certainly help to bring the game up to the Chess level.

It has long been apparent that the advantage of good cards over bad ones is the one drawback to Auction. It has been possible to sit an entire evening at an Auction table and never play a hand—when luck has run very badly. Even to the two partners who held all the cards this sort of victory was flat and tame.

Which do you like better, a “pianola” hand or a hand where you have to tussle and fight for every point, and where the play of every card is vital? The latter, naturally, if you are a good player and prefer skill to luck. With a long run of pianola hands on your own side (hands that play themselves), your skill is not demanded and your victory loses its savor. With a long run of such hands against you, there is nothing to do but to allow yourself to be walked over, and your interest naturally flags. It is when the game is “nip and tuck” that every player is keyed up to proper pitch.

Would it be very interesting or very flattering for a tennis expert to win a match from an ad-

versary who had equal skill, but who, in this particular match, was forced to appear with his right arm in a sling and three fingers broken on his left hand?

Would you want to shoot against a man who had a thick bandage over both eyes?

Certainly not. There is no satisfaction in beating a lame man or a cripple in a race. To beat adversaries as well equipped as one's self, by sheer force of skill, is a satisfactory victory.

Does any one question the fact that the new count improved the game inexpressibly, when it brought the suit-values closer together and destroyed the undue advantage of red suits over black ones? Can any one doubt that an innovation that would make, "bad" cards valuable, and leave "good" ones equally so, would bring the game almost to the point of absolute perfection?

And this is precisely what nullos will do.

They are the greatest equalizers I have ever known. Every time I use them in playing, I hug myself in sheer delight at the beautiful balance of the bidding. It is an artistic triumph. If one side holds all the high cards, and the other all the low ones, both sides are equally advantaged as to bidding; no contracts are captured

too easily, forcing is possible, everybody is in the ring. It is perfectly delightful.

There are already *five* suits on which a player may bid when he holds "good" cards; his object is to take as many tricks as possible; and the more he takes, the more he scores.

It is now proposed to introduce *one* suit on which a player may bid when he holds "poor" cards; his object will be to take as *few* tricks as possible; and the fewer he takes, the more he scores.

That, you see, is giving the crippled player his chance; he may be as great an expert as the man who holds all the aces and kings, but his skill will avail him nothing if he never gets a chance to use it.

Nullos are negative no-trumpers. They are a logical development of the game,—not a change, and that is their greatest advantage over every other innovation that we have had: They do not change the present game in the least; they simply leave it as it is, but add one more suit. *They are not upsetting.* Nothing has to be unlearned or altered; no confusion is caused in our present game; we simply must learn one thing more.

The advantage of this fact is very great. It is tiresome to perfect one's self in a game, and then

to find that the game is going to be played quite differently. The new count went to the root of things and forced us to reconstruct all our former ideas; but it was well worth the trouble. Suppose you had tried to hold out against it—where would you be to-day?

“High spades,” had they gained universal acceptance, would have upset our present game completely—in its bidding, at least. Moreover they are superficial; nullos are vital. They are an *addition*,—not a change! That is their first great point.

The next is that they discount luck—and luck is a very elusive thing. For years we have longed to decrease the luck percentage in Auction and to increase the skill percentage, and now our chance has come.

It is necessary to admit that they call for more skill,—both in play and in discard,—than does any other suit. The low cards are the important ones, and it is impossible to place low cards. High cards are shown by the bidding and by signals of play; low ones are not announced in any way,—and the difference between a deuce and a trey will often mar a nullo-bid. It has been claimed that nullos “are too difficult for inexpert players.” No game is made for the inexpert. I remember that when Auction su-

perseded Bridge, the same cry was raised,—“poor players can never master it.”

It was first proposed that the player of a nullo hand should be allowed to take no trick at all. This would be obviously impossible if he was forced to carry an exposed dummy, which he had not seen during the bidding, and whose high cards would be at the mercy of the adversaries. So dummy was to be thrown aside, and but three hands played. I objected strenuously to this. The exposed dummy is the backbone of Bridge and Auction. It was decided to retain the dummy, and to permit six safe tricks to the person playing “one nullo,” five safe tricks to any one who got the declaration at “two nulos,” etc.

The proper trick-value for nulos was reached only after long experimenting. At first, it was thought that they must be placed at five a trick (just under clubs), or at eleven (just over no-trumps). The five-count proved inadequate,—you could not force the no-trump hand. “Two nulos,” would beat “one no-trump”; but if the no-trump hand went to two, it would take “four nulos” to beat it.

The eleven count was too high. It destroyed the precedence of no-trump—the time-honored “King-bid.” Also, it threatened an inundation

of nulos,—and that would be a catastrophe. We want to be able to bid on “bad” cards, but we do not want to make them *more* valuable than “good” ones!

From the first, I suggested putting nulos in the middle of the line,—at seven a trick,—and moving diamonds and clubs down to six and five respectively. Then there would be two suits lower, and two suits and no-trumps higher. It would make three minor suits—clubs, diamonds, and nulos (negative no-trumpers); and three major suits, hearts, royals and positive no-trumpers. This, however, brought the objection that clubs would be hurt; it would be impossible to go game with five-odd, on a clean score.

Thus, nulos were placed at ten a trick,—the same as positive no-trumpers,—but the no-trump to take precedence in bidding. “One no-trump” would beat “one nullo,” but they would both score ten, when played. And “one nullo” would beat a one-bid in any declared trump.

We played them in this way for about a month, but the result was what I feared,—a preponderance of no-trumpers, either positive or negative.

One of the best points of the new count was

that it released us from the overwhelming percentage of no-trump hands. We had almost forgotten how to play suit-bids. Nothing is so pretty as a suit hand; a good hand in hearts or royals is my idea of perfection. Now, with no-trumps and nullos both at ten a trick, *both* higher than *any* suit bid, we faced a return of this dilemma.

The ideal count has at last been struck. Nullos are to be worth eight a trick,—the same as hearts,—but *hearts take precedence in bidding*. “One heart” will outbid “one nullo,” but either will give you eight on the score.

This, you see, is the exact suit-precedence for which I fought from the beginning. There are three minor-suits headed by a *negative* no-trumper, and three major-suits headed by a *positive* no-trumper,—and hearts and royals are not hurt. Neither are clubs, thanks to the happy device of giving two suits the same value.

The honors were the next question. Some correspondents suggested that there should be no honors; others, that the aces should be the honors, and that they should be scored by the side that held them; still others urged the ingenious argument that as everything is reversed in nullos, the honors should be the deuces instead of the aces. I think, however, there is no

question as to the proper settling of the honors. In any no-trumper, whether positive or negative, the aces should be the honors. In a positive hand, they score positively; in a negative hand, negatively. If tricks score when you don't take them, honors should score when you don't hold them. That is, they score inversely; if one side holds thirty aces, the opposite side scores thirty honors. You don't score for anything actual—not for tricks that you take nor honors that you hold. You score for the tricks that you *fail* to take, and the honors that you *fail* to hold. Then everything is minus—and logical. Minus tricks and minus honors belong together. The other day the dealer bid "one no-trump" on a hand that held a hundred aces. I followed with "two nullos" on a hand that held nothing but trash. He did not dare to let me play nullos because his aces would then have counted for me; I continued to overbid him till I got him to the point where he could not keep his contract. Failing nullos, his hand would have been a walk-over; even with nullos he would have yielded me my bid if he could have kept his aces. To obtain proper bidding and forcing, the aces must certainly count inversely.

If you take more tricks than your contract

calls for (not *fewer*, remember, but *more*), your adversaries score above the line for each overtick. There was some talk of doubling the penalties against a nullo-bid, making them 100 undoubled and 200 doubled. This was because, at first, it looked as though there might be an inundation of nullos, and we wanted to restrict them. But as we play them longer we find how hard a high nullo-bid is to keep and how easy to defeat; if any one bids "three nullos" it is a safe gamble that most of the high cards lie against him and that their holders can bid on them. If any one succeeds in keeping a three-nullo contract, his cards are either so poor that he deserves a compensation, or his skill is very great, or both. He certainly deserves all he gets on the hand.

Thus, to sum up, nullos are negative no-trumpers; the object of every player is to take as few tricks as possible; they are worth eight a trick for every trick named in the contract, and an extra eight for every trick *under* the contract. The adversaries score fifty honors for every trick *over* the contract that they can force upon the declarant. The honors are the aces, and score inversely. Though nullos and hearts count the same, the hearts outrank in bidding.

The player who gets the bid at "one nullo"

is safe if he takes but six tricks; he scores eight for the odd that he fails to take, and an extra eight for every trick under six. If he bids "two nullos" he may take but five tricks; by so doing, he scores sixteen, and an extra eight for every trick under five. If he bids "three nullos," he may take but four tricks; by so doing, he scores twenty-four, and an extra eight for every trick under four.

It is the exact opposite of no-trump. When you bid "one no-trump," you are safe if you take *seven tricks, or more*; when you bid "one nullo," you are safe if you take *six tricks, or less*.

The novice in "nullos" is almost sure to over-bid and to get his fingers burned. An exposed Dummy, lying at the mercy of the adversary, is a big burden to carry. An unguarded king in the Dummy can always be made to take a trick.

The partner of the nullo-bidder should over-call if his hand is a menace to a nullo-bid. And the original nullo-bidder must be very careful not to think of his own hand, alone; if his partner over-calls once, or if he continually refuses to raise the nullo-bid, then let the original bidder beware!

Nullos will not be played often; they will be *bid* more than *played* for the reason that the three major-suits still outrank them. Two

thirds of the hands played are played at hearts, royals, or no-trumps, and this will still be so. For that reason, nulos cannot hurt the game; they will simply give the poor holder a "look-in." If you should chance upon a game, some night, where nulos were played more frequently than any other suit, you would know that the cards were running very unevenly and that, failing nulos, there would have been an equal preponderance of no-trumpers for the opposite pair of players. We are still allowing five suits to the good cards and claiming but one for the poor ones.

Don't be frightened by the novelty of nulos. Remember what a scarecrow the new count was to many players when it first appeared—how they predicted the ruination of the game if it were allowed entrance.

Some natures are naturally experimental and eager to try out novelties; such will need no second urging to see what nulos offer. But to extreme conservatives, the new suit will be very distasteful, at first. It is the old question of progressives and standpatters; you can range yourself on whichever side you like, but you cannot deny the existence of the issue.

I find a number of persons—particularly Englishmen—who know the nullo-bid (or a

form of it) under the term of "misère," or "misery." They have used it in Solo Whist, and have always wished it had an equivalent in Auction. Letters from abroad tell me that Germany is receiving the new suit enthusiastically and looks upon it as a compliment to the national game of Skat; and that France and Switzerland are greatly interested.

After you have used nullos, I think you will miss them greatly, if you are forced to play without them, just as you missed the new count (after you had grown accustomed to it), when you were forced to play with persons who did n't want to learn it.

I have said that it was difficult to win a high nullo-bid. It *is* difficult, but not impossible. The other afternoon I bid, and made, "five nullos," against expert defense,—and the feeling of exhilaration was greater than anything I have experienced for some time. The adversaries could easily have outbid me in no-trumps, but they were sure they had me beaten. However, take my advice and *go slow*, when you begin to experiment with nullos.

We find that nullos are particularly useful as a forcing-bid and as a "flag-flying" bid. They are difficult to play, and a high nullo-bid goes against one more often than not,

because of Dummy. But since the advent of this new suit, I have seen the prettiest "flag-flying" I ever saw in my life. We have learned to do it so well, we no longer congratulate ourselves on "saving rubber," at a cost of six or seven hundred points. We know that such victories are worse than defeats. But we *do* cheerfully go down one or two hundred points to save rubber. We know that it is better to lose two hundred than two hundred and fifty; and that, in the former case, we have another chance at the rubber, while in the latter we have none. And nulos are beautiful flag-fliers; they enable a pair of partners who have n't an ace or a face between them, to get into the game and to save rubber.

You will hardly believe that, in these days of enlightened flag-flying, there are still players who "can't see it." Very recently I had a letter from a man who insisted that it was poor policy to lose a hundred (*one* hundred, mind you), in order to save rubber. Because, forsooth, "you lose the hundred and may lose the rubber too." And, equally, you may not. About chances there is no knowing. But why lose a sure two-hundred-and-fifty in preference to a sure hundred? That is really humorous!

THE PRACTICAL SIDE OF NULLOS

The practical side of this new suit is nearly as difficult to explain as to play. Nothing but long habit will perfect you. Nevertheless, it is very possible to give you some helpful suggestions.

The difficulty arises in the fact that the low cards are the vital ones, and that there is no way of placing them. In other suits the high cards are the important ones, and they are approximately placed by the bidding and passing.

I will designate as "low" cards, all deuces, treys, fours, and fives; as "intermediate cards," all sixes, sevens, eights, nines, and tens; and as "high cards," all aces and faces.

The dealer should open with "one nullo," if he has no better bid and *if he holds low cards in every suit*. It is also possible to bid a nullo with one unguarded suit (*i.e.*, one suit that holds no low cards), provided that suit is in the hand that is not to be exposed,—and that it does not mean more than two or three rounds that must positively be taken. For instance, I should never hesitate to bid "a nullo" on this hand:

♥	A K
♣	7 6 4 2
♦	8 5 3
♠	10 5 3 2

That heart-suit will almost certainly mean two tricks,—because there is no suit on which you will probably get a discard. But two tricks won't hurt you; you can safely take six.

I have recently heard the theory exploited that "the dealer should never open with a nullo for fear his partner has good cards. The *third-hand* should rather be the one to bid a nullo after his partner has opened with a spade."

This is a gross error. It would be as sensible to say that "the dealer should never open with a no-trump, for fear his partner has poor cards."

Let the dealer open with a nullo on every nullo-hand; let him differentiate sharply between an opening nullo-bid and an opening spade-bid; let him be warned by his partner's non-raise, or over-call; and let the *third-hand* be extremely wary of bidding nullos if his partner has opened with a spade,—that bid shows certainly a hand that will hurt nullos.

Before the advent of nullos, we used to bid a spade, on all poor hands. Henceforth, we shall make the bid on *hands that are too high for nullos, and too poor for anything else.*

Hands that are full of intermediate cards—with few low cards to guard them—will be spade hands. Hands that are well-guarded by

low cards, *in at least three suits*, will be nullo-hands.

Aces and kings are no bar to nullo-bids, provided there are also low cards in the same suit. If you have three low clubs and the ace and king, your club-suit won't hurt nullos. You can "duck" for three rounds, and then it is probable that no one can lead them to you. There are but eight clubs held against you; under average conditions, three rounds will exhaust them.

As I have said, all poor hands will not be nullos, and neither will all nullos be poor hands. Take, for instance, the following combinations which show the difference between an opening spade-bid, and an opening nullo-bid:

♥	10 9 7
♣	J 9
♦	8 7 6 5
♠	Q 9 8 6

That is an extremely bad hand, but the dealer who held it would be forced to open with "a spade," and not "a nullo." There are two many high (or *moderately* high) sequences; *too many eights, and nines, and tens;* and too few deuces, treys, and fours.

Auction High-Lights

Here is a hand which, heretofore, we have been forced to open with "a heart" (and a miserable one it was), or "a spade," and possibly discourage partner from a fair "no-trumper":

♥ A J 4 3 2
♣ 6 2
♦ 5 4
♠ 9 5 4 3

To-day, I should open that hand with "a nullo," and feel a good deal safer than I used to feel with "a heart."

Here is another hand that would offer wonderful nullo possibilities:

♥ 3
♣ A Q 10 9 8 6 5 4 3 2
♦ 2
♠ 2

By playing that hand at clubs, you might find the king, and even the jack, guarded against you. Your three singletons might all lose, and your total score on the hand would be eighteen. At nullos, you cannot fail to make a grand slam, *if your partner does not get in your way*; that would be seven tricks at eight apiece, forty for slam,—a total of ninety-six points,—and

game-in. There would be but three clubs held against you,—all high; the adversaries would never be fools enough to lead those high clubs; and if they did, you could “duck” the three leads. They could not make you take a trick in anything.

I should open that hand with “a nullo,” and *if my partner raised me just once*, I should bid “nulos” forever. If he called me off, I should switch to “clubs.”

♥ 6 3
♣ K Q 4 2
♦ Q 10 7 5 4 3
♠ 2

You may bid a nullo on that hand *if it is not to be exposed*,—that is, if you are the original nullo-bidder. The diamonds are safe because they are well-guarded by low cards, and because no one will know of them. You will get a discard for one of your high clubs on the second spade-round, and very possibly a discard for the other high club on the third heart-round.

I should never dream of raising my partner’s nullo-bid on that hand, because the diamonds and clubs would then be on the board; they could probably be made to take four tricks. In fact,

if I held that hand when my partner opened with a nullo and second-hand passed, I should certainly over-call with two diamonds. The trump-length, the spade-singleton, and the two high clubs, would all help; *and it is more necessary to warn your partner from nullos than from any other suit; because nullo fiascos are more deadly than any other!*

♥ J 9 4
♣ Q J 8 4
♦ Q 9 2
♠ 10 9 4

Although there are low cards in every suit, that hand demands a spade-bid and not a nullo. *By bidding "a spade," the dealer denies both a nullo-assist and a possible call-off.* For that reason, I make this statement, which will seem astounding to the novice: *it is more dangerous for third-hand to bid nullos over his partner's opening spade than over any other opening-bid his partner may make!*

You see, a spade-bid almost certainly announces a hodge-podge hand that consists of a mess of intermediate cards,—a deadly sort of Dummy for the nullo-player. It absolutely denies nullo-possibilities. Whereas, a perfectly legitimate heart-make or royal-make may be a

beautiful nullo-assist. The same, of course, is true of diamonds and clubs. Suppose the dealer opens with "a heart" on this:

♥ A K Q 6 5 4 3
♣ 6 4 2
♦ 3
♠ 5 4

That is certainly a heart-make,—but it is also a nullo-assist. Now, if third-hand holds a perfect nullo-hand, he can bid two nullos: if the heart-hand will assist nullos, he can let the bid go; if not,—*i.e.*, if his hand is a splendid heart-hand, or a heart-hand whose *side-suit* would hurt nullos,—he can bid two hearts with no increase of contract. Then the nullo-hand should give up, at once; his story is told, and the telling did not suit his partner; let him never repeat it!

Even when the dealer opens with a no-trump, third-hand is free to bid two nullos. If the no-trump hand is good, its holder will go back to his suit. And in these days of light no-trumpers, two nullos makes an invaluable warning over-call for a player who cannot assist no-trumps, and who has no five-card or six-card suit to show. Suppose the dealer says "a no-trump" on this hand:

♥ K J 5 4
♣ A 3 2
♦ A 5 4 3
♠ 7 2

and suppose his partner holds these cards:

♥ 10 7 6 3
♣ J 5 4
♦ J 7 6 2
♠ 5 3

He has no five-card or six-card suit, with which to make a warning suit-bid. Yet he *has* a perfectly legitimate warning-bid in two nullos. Let him make it; and, if the dealer's hand would kill nullos, or is a really strong no-trumper, let him return to his suit.

Therefore, I repeat: *it is more dangerous for third-hand to bid nullos when his partner has opened with "a spade," than when he has opened with any other bid.* The dealer who opens with a legitimate bid has a chance to over-call his partner's nullo. The dealer who opens with a spade has no such chance.

A *long* suit holding several low cards, is generally an asset in the *closed* hand. It is often dangerous when exposed on the table.

A blank suit is an asset in either hand. Just

as a blank suit is a disadvantage in no-trumps, it is a tremendous advantage in nullos.

Intermediate sequences are the most deadly nullo-holding for either the open hand or the closed one. They are infinitely worse than long suits that run to the ace, or king, or both.

As in every other suit, the original declarer of nullos should consider his partner's hand as well as his own. If you bid royals, or hearts, and your partner calls you off, or declines to raise you,—you regard it as a danger-signal. And so it is! *Remember that in nullos these danger-signals are more worthy of regard than in any other suit!*

Multiply all our former dangers by ten and apply them to nullos, and you will be fairly safe. Very often your partner has a spade-hand (when you are dealer),—a hand that would kill nullos, but is incapable of any bid; let his non-raise be your danger-signal,—and give him a chance to show that non-raise. Don't keep going up and up, on your own poor hand, without a thought of him. Often his hand would not seriously hurt one nullo, but would hurt higher nullo-bids. Again, *give him the chance to raise you, or to pass, and be guided by his choice!*

Suppose you open with "a nullo" and second-hand says "a royal"; then, if your partner passes

instead of raising, regard it as a danger-signal. But suppose you open with a nullo and second-hand passes; your partner's hand may hold a dangerous nullo-combination and a sound bid—in this case, he will over-call (heed the warning). Or it may hold a combination that will not hurt one nullo, and he will pass (give him another chance before you go too high). Or it may be a hand that *will* hurt one nullo yet will not permit a bid,—so he passes. Then, suppose it is fourth-hand, instead of second, that bids "the royal." *Put it up to your partner whether, or not, you shall play two nullos;* even though your own hand warrants the bid, wait to hear from him. Pass,—let second-hand pass,—and see whether your partner passes, or raises. If he passes, be sure that you are well out of it; his hand on the board might have killed you; *if he raises, go on with your bid, as high as you think your hand permits.*

In order to raise a nullo-bid, third-hand should hold low cards in every suit; his partner holds them in every suit but one; now, if he allows himself a suit with no low cards to guard it, it is a very lucky chance if his high suit and his partner's high suit are one and the same. If they are not, there are two suits (between the two hands) that *must* take tricks, and there is also

the chance of the original nullo-bidder being so buoyed up by his partner's raise that he will bid his hand very high. Therefore, let third-hand raise *only* when all suits hold some low cards; and let him distinctly remember that his hand is to be exposed. Let him sound all danger-signals that are necessary and possible—either by over-calls, or by passing.

It is possible in nullos, as in all suits, for the two sides to bid against each other. The dealer may open with a nullo, and one or the other of the adversaries may answer with two nullos; but this adversary should remember that the low cards are probably divided between him and the original bidder, and that his own partner has probably a handful of high, or intermediate cards.

As in all suits, you want the strong hand on your right—so that you can play *after* it. Then you can throw cards that are *immediately under* those with which the strong hand has just been forced to take. If there is a long and strong heart-suit to your right, and if you hold four hearts to the jack (the other three being low cards), the chances are that your jack will never take. If the long and strong heart-suit is on your left, your jack is nearly sure to take, first or last; because you play before the good heart-hand.

If your jack is on the trick, the long hand will "duck" and give it to you; if your jack is *not* on, the long hand will take high, and keep leading low to your jack, till he forces it to take.

Nulos differ from the other suits in this way: there is no set law as to lead. It is a matter of chance more often than not; and the choice of lead will often make, or wreck, a hand. Yet it would often be impossible to say that the one lead was right and the other wrong. After the original lead, and the exposure of Dummy, the planning of the hand becomes more possible.

The best blind-lead, against a nullo-declaration, is a low, or an intermediate card; and, unless this lead be a singleton, the leader should take care to make a lead that still leaves him with a low card, or low cards, in the same suit. A singleton lead is good as it will give you future discards on the suit. An ace-lead, or king-lead, is extremely bad, as it gives the Declarant a chance to "duck" and yet get rid of a high card that might embarrass him later. Lead from two or more low cards, or lead the intermediate card from a suit that holds one low, and one intermediate card.

An intermediate card from a long suit makes a good lead; if the suit is long in your hand, your partner may get a valuable discard on the second

or third round. Also, the Declarant and the Dummy may not be well-guarded with low cards, and will have to take the first round, or a later round. If you lead from this combination:

♥ A J 10 8 2

the ten is an excellent lead, *except* that it may give the Declarant a chance to take twice on the same trick; he may play the queen from one hand and the king from the other; and it will not give your partner a chance to throw the jack or ten, because you hold them both yourself. Yet, the Declarant could also twice-take the deuce (should you lead it), and could throw the suit back to you and force you to take all subsequent rounds,—because you had unguarded yourself; whereas, by leading the ten, you get rid of one high card, and retain a low one for later rounds. If your ten takes, lead the eight; that leaves you still guarded, and may force the dealer to take with a nine; if he ducks *twice*, lead your deuce, (unless you have reason to think he will discard). Then, you see, you have him, and *he cannot probably throw the suit back to your ace and jack.*

When the trick comes up to fourth-hand, if it is already his partner's, he should over-take it, (unless the lead would embarrass him); always

get rid of as many high cards as possible on the same trick. This rule holds for both Declarant and adversaries.

Do you remember how, when we first began to play, every one's idea of playing a no-trump hand was to take immediately every trick in sight! We all skimmed off our cream in the shape of aces and kings and feared to lose even one round or to let the other man in. Gradually we learned that it was policy often to hold back, to lose several tricks, in order to make more, later. So in nullos it is often policy to take several tricks in order to lose more, later.

The Declarant should keep all of Dummy's suits guarded with low cards, as long as possible. He should keep counting the low cards. Suppose the first lead is the deuce of clubs; Dummy goes down with these clubs:

♣ J 10 7 6 5

and in his own hand, the Declarant holds these clubs:

♣ 9 8 4 3

He should play Dummy's jack because it is certain that third-hand (if he holds any clubs at all) must beat the jack; all lower cards lie with the Declarant. And if third-hand holds no

clubs, the Declarant can throw the suit back and force the leader to take three subsequent club-rounds.

The lead of an ace, by the way, is good from the Declarant, when he can throw another high card onto it, and when the ace must take eventually. Suppose he holds the ace of hearts in one hand and the queen in the other. Let him lead his ace (if he is in the ace-hand), and throw his queen,—*if he does not hold the jack, or ten, in either hand!* Even though the adversaries throw their king onto the ace, they will have to take the second round of the suit. If the Declarant can get rid of two high cards, and if his next cards are all low, he will be advantaged by the ace-lead.

The moment the first lead is out, and Dummy goes down on the board, the adversaries should notice all its weak spots (remembering that *strong* spots are “weak spots”), and should continue to hammer them. Suppose Dummy holds three diamonds—the jack, the trey, and the deuce; *that jack of diamonds should be made to take a trick.* You may hold the ten, the eight, and the six. Don’t be deterred from leading the suit by the fact that Dummy can duck twice. The third round can be forced on him, if he ducks the first two. This is particularly for-

tunate if the adversary who holds the three last-named diamonds (the ten, the eight, and the six) plays *before* Dummy. Then the second adversary can suit his play to Dummy's play; if Dummy puts up the jack on the first round, the second adversary can duck. If Dummy ducks the first round, the second adversary can take with an unnecessarily high card (such as the ace, or king), and lead the suit again. *Neither adversary should lead the ace, the king, or the queen,—as that would permit Dummy to throw the jack.*

If Dummy shows dangerous strength, the adversaries should first seek to take out all of Dummy's low cards and then throw him in with his high ones. If Dummy holds three low hearts and two low diamonds, and strength in the black suits, the adversaries should lead two high diamonds, and three high hearts, and then throw Dummy in with a black card. This scheme the declarant should seek to frustrate. He should take tricks in his own hand, if possible, and change the lead, rather than allow Dummy to be shorn of all his low cards.

Suppose you are playing a nullo-hand: five rounds have been played, and you have just taken the sixth round in Dummy; Dummy's remaining cards are these:

♥ —
♣ J 7
♦ J 6 4
♠ A 2

Clubs and diamonds are exhausted in the adversaries' hands; you can therefore not lead a club or a diamond. *You must lead your ace of spades and then your deuce;* you must do this, even if it sets you in your bid. You will be worse set if you don't! By leading the deuce, the adversaries will take, and will throw you another spade,—forcing you to take every other trick! By leading the ace and then the deuce, you make it impossible for them to throw you in!

The discard calls for the greatest possible care. Let us imagine that you are playing nullos on this hand:

♥ A 6 5 3 2
♣ 10 9 3
♦ 8 6 4 3
♠ 2

The adversary's first lead is a spade, which you duck, in both hands. If he leads another spade, you get a discard. Don't discard that ace of hearts, because it is the highest card in your hand. It is not at all dangerous, because you can duck four rounds of hearts, and it is

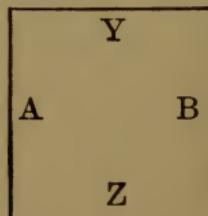
highly improbable that the adversaries can lead a fifth round. If they can, it won't hurt you to take it, and get a discard in Dummy. Let your discard on the second spade be your ten of clubs; those intermediate clubs are much more harmful to you than is your ace of hearts.

I am going to give here some examples of the play and bidding of nullo-hands. Others will be found among the Test-Hands in another chapter.

Here is a wonderful illustration of a nullo-hand; it actually occurred:

♥	K J
♣	A K J 7 5 4
♦	Q J
♠	A J 7

♥	10 9 6 3 2
♣	8 6 3
♦	K 9 5
♠	8 4



♥	A 5 4
♣	9 2
♦	A 10 8 2
♠	10 6 5 2

♥	Q 8 7
♣	Q 10
♦	7 6 4 3
♠	K Q 9 3

It was the first deal of a new rubber.

Z must open with "one spade." He cannot say "a nullo," because his spades, hearts, and clubs are all too dangerous. They are all fairly high cards, there are too many deuces, treys, fours, fives, etc., held against him. This differentiation between "a spade" and "a nullo" is very interesting. You are far safer at nulos holding these hearts:

♥ A J 5 4 3 2

than holding these:

♥ J 10 9 7

A has a perfect nullo-bid, but he should pass the spade; his partner might be strong.

It would depend on Y's temperament whether he said "a club," or "a no-trump." His partner's hand is bad; his suits (barring clubs) are short and in execrable combinations; they should be led to, and, if his partner's hand holds no reëntry, Y will have to lead away constantly from his own hand. His clubs are not established, the queen may easily be guarded against him. I should hate the no-trump, and I should bid the club.

B should bid "one nullo" over "a club," and "two nulos" over "a no-trump." His only danger is in his diamonds; ace, ten, eight may mean three tricks in diamonds. However,

we will suppose that he says "a nullo." This sounds good to A.

Z has a hand to help either no-trumps or clubs. As his partner has announced a club-suit (which he himself can fill), as he stops hearts once and spades twice (provided the leads come right), I should think he would say "one no-trump" with the score at love. This sounds good to Y.

Now the bidding runs between no-trumps and nullos. As A-B, I should not hesitate to bid the latter up to four or five; that would make 32, or 40, for Z-Y to beat.

Z-Y can make but two-odd at no-trumps. A leads his fourth-best heart; B takes with the ace and changes the suit, returning his fourth-best diamond. A takes and returns his nine. They make five tricks before Z gets in.

Z-Y can bid clubs successfully up to four. If B leads his heart-ace and gets no "encouragement card" from A, he will abandon the suit and lead his diamond ace. A will play encouragement, B will lead again, and they will take three tricks.

Thus, "four clubs," or "two no-trumps" would be the only successful bids Z-Y could make, and A-B could outbid either with nullos.

Of course, nullos will lie with you on some

deals, and against you on others. But the point is that they discount luck (a thing we have never before achieved), and let every one into the game. There are fewer "walk-overs" for any one.

Here is another remarkable hand that has aroused considerable discussion. It is the best possible lesson on nullo-play although it would never be played at nullos. The correspondent who sent it to me announced that "B could take three-odd in nullos, in spite of a strong Dummy." As a matter of fact, B could make but one nullo against expert defense; and unless he played remarkably well, he could n't make that. Here is the hand:

♥ J 3		
♣ 5 4 3		
♦ A K Q 10 5		
♠ Q J 8		
♥ K	Y	♥ 10 6 5 4
♣ A K J 10 9	A	♣ 8 7 2
♦ 6 2	B	♦ 9 7 4
♠ A K 6 4 3	Z	♠ 10 7 2
♥ A Q 9 8 7 2		
♣ Q 6		
♦ J 8 3		
♠ 9 5		

Z opens with "a heart"; A can say "a royal," or "two clubs"; I should choose the one-bid, keeping the high suit for trumps and the strong minor-suit for side-suit (provided it was a clean score). Forty-eight honors are nothing wonderful. Either bid would be perfectly correct.

Let us suppose that A says "a royal"; Y can say "two hearts," or "two diamonds"; he would probably choose the latter. And B might answer with "two nulos."

B's bid would serve as a forcer, only; his adversaries would probably not let him play "two nulos" and his partner should certainly never permit it; but even as a forcer it helps the bidding, keeps B in the ring, and warns his partner to expect nothing from him. And, as an example, we will suppose that B is playing the hand at nulos, and that Z leads the five of spades.

B plays the six of spades from Dummy (he sees the two, three, and four in his own hands and knows Y must take); B cannot afford to put up the ace or king, as it would give Y a chance to throw an honor; he plays the six and Y takes with the queen, or jack, or eight.

Now a novice, in Y's place, would lead the three of hearts, in order to make Dummy take with his lone king. That would make B's

victory complete. He would take the heart, perforce, and then lead his three high clubs, so as to exhaust the adversaries' clubs and prevent them from throwing him in. Then he would lead a little diamond and never take another trick. He could "duck" diamonds, spades, and hearts, and no one could lead him a club.

When Y takes the first spade-round, he should play the ace and king of diamonds to exhaust Dummy's low cards. Then, if he leads his jack and eight of spades and if B lets him take both rounds, he can throw Dummy in with a heart, and Dummy will take three rounds of clubs, one of hearts, and two of spades, unavoidably. But if B takes the jack of spades with Dummy's ace, leads three rounds of clubs (to exhaust the adversaries' clubs and cut out a possible club-lead from them) and then the king of hearts, he will take but the book. Z will throw his ace of hearts on the third club-round and his queen onto the king; Y will throw his jack onto the king and B his ten, but when A leads a small spade and Y takes with the eight he can lead his trey of hearts and force one heart-round on B. However, B can throw it back again to Z on the next round.

Now suppose, after Y takes the first round of spades, he leads his jack and B comes in (cor-

rectly) with Dummy's ace, he should lead three rounds of clubs and then his king of hearts. But after two club-rounds he will know by actual count that one of his adversaries is exhausted and will get a discard on the third round. That discard may be an ace. If B allows this fact to deter him from the third club-lead he is lost. Z can take the king of hearts with the ace, lead a diamond which Y will take, and will follow with another high diamond, and the eight of spades. That makes five tricks (two spades, one heart, and two diamonds). Y will still have a little club to throw A in, and A takes every other trick. There is one way, and one only, by which B can keep a contract of "one nullo" against the best defense.

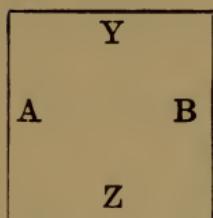
Are nullos difficult? Are they interesting? And do they presuppose the greatest skill imaginable?

Here are a few more examples of nullo-hands, —all taken from actual experience:

The score is 18 to 6, rubber-game.

♠ K J 9 6
 ♣ A 7 5 4
 ♦ A 10 5 4 3
 ♡ —

♠ Q 10
 ♣ K 9 8
 ♦ K Q 2
 ♡ J 10 9 7 6



♠ A 8 4
 ♣ J 10
 ♦ J 9 8 7 6
 ♡ A Q 8

♠ 7 5 3 2
 ♣ Q 6 3 2
 ♦ —
 ♡ K 5 4 3 2

Neither Z nor Y has a strong bid, and in combination their hands are awful. Each lacks the other's suit. Y's hearts are bad for nulos; but if he can get a discard or two, on spade-rounds, he can afford to bid nulos. Also, a round or two in hearts won't hurt him; his other suits are full of low cards.

Did you ever sit at an Auction table all evening without playing a hand and without saying a word but "by"? I have; and I fancy many others have. *That cannot happen with the introduction of nulos!* Of course, the adversaries may be "playing for blood," and may be delighted to get all the cards,—there are such

players! *But wait till their turn comes to sit still,* and see if they don't look for nulos! With the adoption of the new suit, there will be no more "dead" games; every player will have his chance.

Here is another hand; it is the first deal on a new rubber:

♥ 9 8 7 5 4		
♣ J		
♦ Q 5		
♠ Q 10 6 5 2		
♥ A Q	Y	♥ K 10 6
♣ A 10 9 3	A	♣ K 8 5 2
♦ K 10 9 8		♦ J 7 2
♠ K J 8	B	♠ A 9 7
	Z	
♥ J 3 2		
♣ Q 7 6 4		
♦ A 6 4 3		
♠ 4 3		

Would it be more interesting to let A-B walk off with their "no-trumper," without a struggle,—or to bid it up a bit, between "nulos" and "no-trumps," till it grew exciting and worth while? Do you enjoy games where every contract goes at one-odd, and where the Declarant walks off without opposition? There is nothing exciting or stimulating about Auction of that kind.

Here are a few more "examples from real life."
Try them with nullos, and without:

♥ K 9 2

♣ J 9 8 7

♦ 9 7

♠ J 9 5 2

♥ 8 7 6 5 3

♣ 10 3

♦ 5 3 2

♠ 10 6 3

	Y	
A		B
	Z	

♥ 4

♣ A K 6 5

♦ 6 4

♠ A K Q 8 7 4

♥ A Q J 10

♣ Q 4 2

♦ A K Q J 10 8

♠ —

♥ 7 3

♣ K Q 6 2

♦ A J 5 4

♠ 8 7 5

♥ 10 9 6 5

♣ 10 8 3

♦ 7 3

♠ A K 10 3

	Y	
A		B
	Z	

♥ A K J 8

♣ J 9

♦ K Q 10 9 8

♠ J 9

♥ Q 4 2

♣ A 7 5 4

♦ 6 2

♠ Q 6 4 2

Auction High-Lights

♠ 7 6
 ♣ Q 5 3
 ♦ A 7 6 4 2
 ♠ A K 5

♥ 10 5 3
 ♣ A K
 ♦ Q J 9 5
 ♠ Q 10 8 4

	Y	
A		B
	Z	

♥ K Q 9
 ♣ J 9 8 6
 ♦ 10 8 3
 ♠ J 9 6

♥ A J 8 4 2
 ♣ 10 7 4 2
 ♦ K
 ♠ 7 3 2

See what splendid forcing can be done on this last hand.

Remember, "nulos" ask only that one suit in six may be given to poor holders; they make their plea in the name of fair play; and they leave the three important suits,—the three that are generally played,—still absolutely supreme.

Take these suggestions as a basis, and enlarge on them by practical experience. Nothing but that will teach you to play nulos. As I have said, you are almost certainly going to get your fingers burned when you first begin to handle them. You will probably over-bid your hands and then blame your partner for not calling you

off,—when he holds a combination of intermediate cards which kills your bid, but which would just as surely kill any bid he attempted. Later, you will grow wiser; you will listen to over-calls; you will be warned by non-raises; you will give your partner a chance to pass before you bid nulos to three and four. And when, in the end, you have become expert in handling this most difficult of all suits, you will admit that it is the subtlest, the most fascinating, and the *fairest* addition that the game has received since we opened our arms to the new count. At that, we looked askance when it was first suggested to us; now there is nothing that could induce us to give it up. And unless my predictions are very much at fault, we shall repeat this experience in the new suit of nulos.

I append extracts from a few of the many letters I have received on the subject:

“We are fascinated by the possibilities of ‘nulos.’ As you say, they seem to give the game new life.”

“Your recent references to the nullo-bid have been of great interest to me. Having played a great deal of Solo Whist, I have always felt a great craving for a ‘misère’ bid in Auction.”

“I have tried ‘nulos,’ and I like the game. I believe this recent addition should be permanent.”

"Your arguments for adopting nulos have interested me very much. I am an old Skat player, and thought it the best game in the world till Auction was brought up to its present standard; but even at that it always lacked something—the defensive side of the game, I should call it. There are many people who practically always hold poor hands, and their only defense, up to now, has been to reduce their losses by not bidding and by letting the other side win.

"This, at best, is unsatisfactory, and will dishearten the best player. Even several years ago attempts were made to equalize the game. I remember how surprised I was, when playing in Trinidad, on holding 100 aces and declaring no-trump, to have one of my opponents throw down his hand and claim a new deal. He had not a face-card in his hand, and the club at which we played had made that ruling to equalize luck. Nulos seem the logical way to give the poor holder an even chance. . . . My experience has been that it takes more skill to play nulos than any other suit."

CHAPTER III

TEAM-WORK

THERE is no part of Auction that has made greater strides in the past year than team-work. The combining of the two hands, by means of legitimate bidding and over-calling, has reached the height of perfection.

In tennis it is a well-known fact that the man who holds the championship for singles is rarely a wonderful player in doubles. Occasionally, a man appears whose gifts are equally great in both lines, and then he is a star of the first magnitude. But, as a rule, the man whose work in singles is perfection, is the one whose *team-work* leaves something to be desired.

And so in Auction! I have seen scores of persons whose art was perfection when it was a question of playing their own hands combined with Dummy's; their accuracy was flawless; they never dropped a trick. And their team-work in *playing* was excellent, even when the

adversaries had captured the bid; *but their team-work in bidding was atrocious!*

While I admire the faultless player intensely, I should choose the faultless bidder for my partner. Give me the man who never offers me false information; who never declares the king when his highest card is the jack; who never makes a double that will give the adversaries a chance for a safe shift; who knows how to stop bidding his own suit and leave me my better one; who can practice self-effacement when the cards demand it; who will give me a warning over-call when my bid strikes a bad combination in his hand; *who will give me the opportunity to tell him that his bid is unwelcome to me;* and above all, *who thrusts no undesirable responsibilities upon me, in the shape of conventional bids to which I am forced to respond, whether I like it or not!*

I do not consider conventional calls good team-work. While they make an exact announcement of the bidder's cards, they make it in a bid that is not playable. Sometimes they suit the partner's hand, and sometimes not. When they do not, they are execrable team-work. When they do, they are unnecessary team-work. Legitimate information, given by bids, with which the bidder is willing and able to be left,

show much more consideration to his partner and, at the same time, tell all that a player should be permitted to tell.

There are no longer any "rescue" bids! I wish all players could grasp this fact. "*I must take my partner out of a 'spade',*" and "*I must take my partner out of a double,*" are two sentiments that are responsible for thousands of Auction fiascos.

Granting that your partner knows how to play, he will not bid "a spade" unless he is forced to. If he makes that bid, it means that he has a very poor hand and is trying to limit his losses. It means that he can probably give you very little help if you try to "relieve the situation" by making a bid in which your losses are *not* limited. *If your partner bids a spade and the second hand passes, you should not bid unless you have good material for your bid!* This is especially true of a no-trump bid. A light suit-bid will sometimes win, under the circumstances, because of ruffs or cross-ruffs. But the light no-trumpers with which it is legitimate, and even desirable, to open, are not advisable from third-hand when his partner has opened with a spade. As dealer, you hope that your partner has help; as third-hand, you know he has none.

A light bid from third-hand will sometimes

start up the bidding, and that is better than being "left in with a spade." But if the adversaries refuse to be started up, third-hand has a sorry job in combining his own light hand with his partner's poor one. He is apt to wish he had accepted the alternative of losing one hundred.

If a light bid is to be made under these conditions, a suit-bid is preferable to a no-trumper.

Neither is it wise to attempt to "rescue" your partner from a double. Good players do not double one suit unless they can double all suits. This means that you will be doubled, in your turn, and that you have made your bid because you were frightened, while your partner made his because he wanted to and because he considered his hand was worth it. His hand is almost certainly stronger than yours on which you are attempting to "rescue" him. It is better that he should play the strong hand than that you should play the weak one. He may even *like* the double!

I have a favorite way of illustrating this to my pupils. Suppose you were out in a swift current in a nice, tight, safe little boat; some onlookers on the bank, seeing the danger of the current, would say: "I bet that man cannot make it; I bet he will drown." Then your friend, overhearing the remark, becomes panic-stricken;

seizing an old water-logged plank, he jumps on it and pushes it out into the stream. And he cries to you: "Oh, they say you will drown in that boat; come onto my plank with me!" *The current is the same, the danger is the same; where would you rather face them, on the plank or in the boat?*

There are still some players who cling to the old-fashioned double of one-bids to show that they stop the suit. They divide doubles into "informatory" doubles and "business" doubles. This method belongs distinctly, I think, to a past day. *All doubles, now, should be business doubles;* they should never be made on a "one-bid," and they should never give the adversary a loophole for escape.

By "rescue" bids then, I mean forced bids to take a partner out of "a spade," and out of a double. And I repeat: *There are no longer any rescue bids!*

If your partner is the one who makes a double, *let him alone!* Don't change his double to a bid, unless that bid will put you rubber. His double is worth a hundred a trick; your bid cannot possibly be so valuable; his tricks begin to count after you have taken three, or four, or five,— yours not till after you have laid up your book of six tricks. If he doubles the adversary's

hearts, for instance, don't get frightened because you, yourself, hold no hearts. *The very fact that you have none, shows that they are all banked in your partner's hand!*

One of the foundations of good team-work is the following rule:

If your partner makes a bid in any of the three major-suits (hearts, royals, or no-trumps), never interfere with him, unless as a warning that your hand will be an absolutely hopeless one in his suit, or unless you hold four or five honors in a high suit.

If your partner bids hearts, never change it to *anything*, unless you are "chicane" in hearts (or have only one little spot), or unless you have four or five honors in royals, or a hundred aces for no-trump. If you have a singleton heart that is the ace, the king, or the queen, let his suit alone. Your honor will help him clear it; it may even take a trick. If you have two little hearts, let his suit alone; your two trumps added to the five which he must probably hold will give him the bigger half of all the trumps in the pack. Don't change to "two clubs" on a wonderful club-suit; use that as a side-suit for his hearts. Would n't you rather have trumps worth eight and side-suit worth six, than trumps worth six and side-suit worth eight?

Again, don't change his hearts to no-trumps unless you have a hundred aces. If you have not, let him play his hearts, and give him your no-trump hand in support. It takes four of his suit, and three of yours, to go game. Your no trump hand should certainly supply that extra trick. *Your hand helps his heart hand, by supplying good side-suit; his hand may not work well with your no-trump.* It is not necessarily a long established suit on which he bids "a heart."

Still again, don't change his hearts to royals, unless you hold seventy-two honors, or eighty honors, or cannot help *at all*, to play hearts. True, royals are higher than hearts; but they are no better for game. It takes four of either to go game; give him, then, your spades as side support.

If your partner bids "a heart," second-hand passes, and you hold this:

♥	9 4 2
♣	A K Q 10 8 6
♦	Q 4 3
♠	8

pass also, on a clean score. It takes five clubs and only four hearts to go game. You have three trumps, a side-singleton, and a wonderful side-suit. *Don't be dazzled by those club-honors,* unless you have enough on the score to go game

in clubs with two or three odd. In that case, you might as well bid them and get your honors. But on a clean score, play "hearts" rather than clubs. Your partner's hearts might make a wretched side-suit; they might be long and scattered; one adversary might stop them and the other might ruff them. Your clubs cannot fail to be a wonderful side-suit after trumps are gone; they would also make forcers, if the adversary held the long trump.

Pass your partner's "heart"-bid, on the following hands:

♥	8 5
♣	Q 9
♦	8 6 5 3
♠	A K Q 6 2

(unless your score is *just* twelve; in that case, over-call with "a royal"; eighteen would put you game and sixteen would not).

♥	Q
♣	K 8 4 2
♦	A K 7 2
♠	9 8 5 3
♥	J 7 3
♣	A K 8 5
♦	K Q 4
♠	A 3 2

Over-call on the following hands:

♥ 9 7 5
♣ K 10
♦ 5 3
♠ A K Q 10 8 2

(“A royal” is your proper bid, because of the honors.)

♥ —
♣ A K Q 9 8 5 3
♦ Q 7 4
♠ 9 8 6

(Over-call with “two clubs,” as a warning.)

♥ 9
♣ A K 5 4 2
♦ K Q 8 6
♠ K J 4

(Over-call with “two clubs,” or “a no-trump.” The latter bid is signal that you cannot help hearts, *but have every other suit well stopped*. If your partner goes back to “two hearts,” let him alone. Don’t warn twice! It might be a disastrous no-trumper. If your partner’s suit did n’t clear in one round and if he held no side reentry, you could not use his hearts. If the

ace-queen of spades and the ace of diamonds lay on the wrong side of you, you would have but three tricks in your hand.)

This is the acme of good team-work. Formerly, if your partner opened with "a heart," and second-hand passed, you would say "two clubs," on this hand:

♥	K 9 5
♣	A K Q 9 8 7 6 2
♦	A
♠	8

Some people bid that way yet, but it is poor team-work. Just look what your partner can do with his own hearts and your hand for support!

Now take every rule that I have just given you for hearts, and apply it to royals. Don't over call a heart-bid or a royal-bid except for the reasons just specified. And that brings us to no-trumps.

If your partner bids "a no-trump," the next hand passes, and you have an absolutely blank hand, should you, or should you not, change your partner's no-trump to two in a suit? In other words, should you warn him of your inability to help in no-trump?

Most decidedly you should warn him if you are able. But to do so on insufficient material would be to increase your danger instead of to lessen it.

When your partner bids no-trump, his suit is aces and kings. If you have no aces and kings, you are blank in his suit. How shall you tell him so?

Tell him so by bidding two on any six-card suit, or any five-card suit that runs to a ten spot (or any card higher than a ten spot); but on no four-card suit, and on no five-card suit that is headed by a card that is lower than a ten.

To change a no-trump to two in any suit (with no bid from the intervening adversary), is a distinct backward bid; a backward bid is always a signal of weakness. Therefore, if your partner says "a no-trump," the next hand passes, and you say "two clubs," you are not telling your partner that you hold wonderful clubs; you are telling him that your hand is a wretched one, that it is void of aces and kings; but that you have six little clubs, or five little clubs headed by the ten spot or higher, or, possibly, *a good suit of clubs, but nothing else*.

After this warning-bid, if he chooses to go back to his no-trumps, knowing that he must take care of them alone, and that there is probably not

a single taking card in your hand, then let him alone. You have warned him once and you have done your duty; there is no necessity for any further responsibility on your part.

To a novice, it would seem absurd to bid two clubs on six little clubs to a seven-spot—especially when the bid was not a forced one. But a shaky hand is always safer as a declared trump than as a no-trump. Nothing is so hopeless as a no-trump that goes wrong; there is no possible way to save it, no way to "get in."

In a trump make, you can ruff suits—get a cross-ruff—use little trumps separately in the two hands; if your partner has a no-trump hand and you have half of the clubs in the pack (six or seven) you are fairly safe to make two-odd in clubs, even with all five honors against you; even with five clubs to an honor (and your partner's no-trump hand) your bid is not a preposterous one. But when you hold but four trumps, you are too short to do any ruffing; and as your object in changing the bid was simply that you might be able to do some ruffing with your weak hand, it follows that you must not change it on any four-card suit.

The idea has spread that you must "warn your partner away from a no-trump" whenever you have no help for him; but players do not

wait to be instructed on the proper material on which this warning-bid is to be made. They are so thrilled with their new discovery, that they are constantly found bidding "two diamonds" on four to the queen-jack-ten (and not another trick on the hand) or on the queen and three little spots. You see how foolish such bids would be. You are too weak for ruffing and you assume a contract that is twice as heavy as was your partner's; also (and this is very important) *you are far more apt to be doubled.* No one will double your partner's no-trump, for no one doubles bids of one, therefore, he cannot lose more than fifty a trick. Any one may double your two diamonds, and you may lose one hundred a trick.

It is because of these excellent rules that we are enabled to bid the light no-trumpers that we bid to-day. We bid them to avoid opening with a spade; the adversaries are far more apt to bid against our no-trump than against our spade, and we are not left to play a hopeless hand. You cannot bid a no-trump on *nothing*, of course. You must have three suits stopped, at least. But you can bid it on next to nothing,—and on hands that used to be considered helping hands only. The adversaries will probably take you out of your no-trumper;

if they don't, it is almost a safe gamble that your partner has help for you; and if he has no help, he may at least hold material enough for a warning-bid.

It is never necessary to warn twice. "A word to the wise is sufficient." If you warn your partner away from his suit and he returns to it, *let him alone.*

And it is not necessary to warn if the intervening adversary bids. In that case, your partner does not hold the bid when it comes to you. Why warn him away from something which he does n't have? The mere fact of your passing, instead of raising his bid, is proof enough that you cannot help him.

If you are the dealer and have opened with "one spade," and your partner says "a no-trump," you are relieved of the necessity for any warning-bid. Your opening-bid was warning enough; third hands should hold very good cards to go to no-trumps when their partners have opened with "a spade."

Here is the most striking example of the wisdom of these rules that I have seen recently:

♥ —		
♣ 7 6 5 4 3 2		
♦ 8 7 5		
♠ 10 9 8 2		
♥ Q J 9 8 6 2	Y	♥ 10 7 4 3
♣ 10	A	♣ A Q J
♦ 6 4 3	B	♦ K Q 10
♠ 7 6 3	Z	♠ K J 5
♥ A K 5		
♣ K 9 8		
♦ A J 9 2		
♠ A Q 4		

Z bid "a no-trump," A went by, and Y made the warning over-call of "two clubs," on "any six-card suit." Every one passed, and Y made four-odd against extremely clever defense; against ordinary defense he would have made game without any trouble.

Z could not have made even his book at no-trump. He was clever enough not to go back to his suit after Y's warning-bid, for he realized that both his diamonds and spades must positively be led up to—and that his side hand would be a wonderful help in clubs. In spite of the fact that four of the club honors lay against them, Y's great length in clubs precluded the proba-

bility of any other player holding very many of that suit. It was a wonderfully correct bid.

But you can see, can you not, how aghast the ordinary player would be to hear "a two-club" bid on Y's hand? "'Two clubs' on that hand! And you call yourself a conservative player!" You know the line of arguments such a bid would elicit. Then, convinced of having discovered something brilliant and desirous of impressing less well-informed acquaintances, they would proceed to over-call "no-trumps" on hands like this:

♥	9 8 5
♣	Q 4 3 2
♦	10 8 7
♠	7 6 3

There's no six-card suit in that hand; there is no "five-card suit that runs to a ten or higher"; there is no short suit or missing suit; and there is no sense in the bid.

In nulos, a warning over-call is more necessary even than in no-trump for the reason that no suit can go against one as over-whelmingly as nulos. This is because of the exposed Dummy; every one can take advantage of Dummy's high cards and force them to take tricks. If a singleton king lies on the board, it can always be made to

take; whereas, in other suits, an exposed king never takes if the adversaries hold his ace. *If your partner bids nullos and you hold a strong hand, you should never fail to over-call, as a sign of dangerous strength.* Your hand is not necessarily a menace because it holds some aces or kings, *provided that it holds also several low cards in the same suits as the aces and kings.* If the intervening adversary has over-bid your partner, you need sound no warning note.

A mistaken idea has arisen that a warning bid must necessarily be "backward,"—*i. e.*, must be in a suit that is lower than your partner's. This is not true. If, on a clean score, your partner bids "a heart," the next adversary passes, and you say "a royal," that is a warning-bid. Royals are higher than hearts, but they are no better for game, on a clean score. If you had any heart-help, you would pass and use your royals as a side-suit, *unless they held four or five honors.* Your over-call therefore shows that you lack heart-help, or hold high honors in a better suit! It is a warning to get away from hearts. If your partner goes back to his hearts, *let him alone, unless you hold five royal-honors!* His return to his suit, after your warning over-call, may show that he has five heart-honors and is chicane in royals. Your suit may fit

him no better than his fits you. If you *do* happen to hold five royal-honors, go back again to your royals, and then *he* should let *you* alone. You have positively announced high honors in a better suit than his. Your first over-call may simply have been a declaration of heart-weakness and a fair royal-suit. Your second over-call announces positively that your hand is more valuable than his can possibly be. It is very bad team-work when two partners continue to bid each other up, while the adversaries sit still and smile at the thought of the penalties which grow more probable every moment.

Remember, then, *when you warn, do it on the first round, do it only if you have the material and do it only once,—unless your suit is better than your partner's can possibly be.*

Good team-work pre-supposes a certain amount of self-effacement and the consideration of one's partner as well as of one's-self.

All that I have just said, pre-supposes that the adversary passes your partner's bid. If he bids, in place of passing, it is a different question. You need worry no longer over danger-signals and warnings; you have your choice of four things—passing, raising your partner's bid, naming a suit of your own, and doubling the adversary.

Naming a suit of your own is your proper choice, only when that suit is better than your partner's, and will put your game in fewer tricks.

Passing is your proper choice only when you cannot possibly raise your partner's bid, and cannot possibly make a legitimate bid of your own. To pass when you can raise, or can bid, is to shirk your responsibilities, *unless you pass in the hope of defeating the adversary's bid*. Then your pass is more than warranted,—it is advisable. *It is better to defeat than to bid, unless your bid would put you game.* But don't harbor many hopes of defeating "one-bids."

Also, *never double "one-bids"* and never double the only bid you can defeat. You give the adversary and his partner the chance to make a safe shift. If you use this rule, you will make fewer doubles; but you will never make *one* that you regret! My pupils are noted for never losing a double!

Raising your partner's bid properly, requires a perfect knowledge of the raising rules. Fortunately, they are explicit.

You cannot raise on trumps alone; you cannot raise on any one suit alone (except a long *established* suit at no-trumps); you cannot raise on only one trick,—you must hold two tricks,—a "trick" and a "raiser."

Three things are "tricks" and five things are "raisers." Tricks are side-aces, side-kings, and guarded trump-honors. And these three, with two additional ones, are raisers; thus, raisers are: guarded trump-honors, *or* side-aces, *or* side-kings, *or* singletons, *or* missing-suits. A plain singleton is one "raiser"; a singleton ace is two "raisers"; and a blank suit is two "raisers." *And your trick and your raiser must lie in different suits!*

Guarded queens are not "raisers," in a suit-make, because the third round of a side-suit is too apt to be ruffed by one of the adversaries. In no-trump, on the contrary, any guarded honor is "a trick," and any other guarded honor is "a raiser,"—because there is no ruffing.

If your partner bids "a diamond" and the next hand says "a heart," you can *not* say "two diamonds" on this hand:

♥	9 6
♣	Q 8 4
♦	A 10 7 5 3 2
♠	10 5

The only tricks you have are trumps, and "you must not raise on trumps alone." The adversaries will be leading and *they will not lead trumps.* You may lose six, or even seven, tricks

before you ever get in. Don't you know that old cry of "I can't get in!" Of course you can't get in with three suits against you and only one with you.

On this hand, on the contrary, you can easily say "two diamonds."

♥	6
♣	Q 10 9 7
♦	8 5 4 2
♠	A 7 6 3

You hold a singleton and can ruff the adversary's suit on the second round; you have several little trumps, for ruffing; and you can stop spades as soon as they are led; you can "get in," and run the hand to suit yourself.

On this hand you can say "two diamonds," and later, "three diamonds," and "four diamonds":

♥	A 4 3 2
♣	A
♦	9 6 4 3
♠	K 9 8 5

Your ace of hearts is "a trick," your king of spades is one "raiser," and your singleton ace of clubs is "two raisers." You will never lose a round of clubs.

To raise your partner once, you must hold one trick and one "raiser." To raise him twice, you must hold one trick and two "raisers"; to raise him three times, you must hold one trick and three "raisers,"—and so on. *And it is your absolute duty to announce every "raiser" you hold!*

I should not raise my partner's suit-bid if I were chicane, even if I held two side-aces. Strictly speaking, those aces would be "a trick and a raiser." But to lack your partner's suit entirely would mean that you could n't lead to him, that the weak hand could never ruff, and that there might be too many trumps held against him.

Of course, improper makes will kill perfectly legitimate raises. If your partner bids on a jack-suit, and you raise him on two side-aces and a couple of little trumps, the bid may fail. But the trouble is with the bid and not with the raise. He has no right to bid on a jack-suit.

The original bidder of a suit should bid legitimately. His suit should count *seven* points (counting every honor two and every plain card one),—and it should be headed by the ace or the king. Queen-bids are irregular but may occasionally be made; they should come to eight or nine points and the hand should hold side

strength and ruffs. Also, the player who bids on a queen, must go back to his suit if his partner tries "no-trumps," or doubles. But the standard make is headed by the ace or king and counts seven points, or more. When the original bidder wishes to go up in his suit, he should count his losers,—*not* his takers. The assisting hand need not trouble to count losing cards; he must simply announce all his legitimate "raisers."

Let the making hand count all losing cards; let the assisting hand announce all "raisers"; then let the making hand deduct his partner's announced takers from his own losers, and he will know how high to bid.

Don't you see what sense it makes? Don't you understand that the original bidder kills all chances of thus combining the two hands, if he insists on unwarranted makes, or on opening-bids of more than one?

I have almost never seen heavy penalties lost under this system of combined effort!

The pre-emptive bidder does atrocious teamwork,—or rather, he has not grasped its first principles. He says to his partner: "Don't interfere with me, I don't care one iota what you have or what you have n't. I 'm going to play this hand, whether it combines well with yours,

or not." On top of this, two adversaries working together, are pitted against a player who insists on working alone.

What would you think, of a tennis-player who was playing a set of doubles and who would say to his partner: "I'm going to dispense with you, altogether; get out of my way. I'm going to play net, and I'm going to play back. Stand over on that side-line and don't let me see you move a finger."

He may be strong enough to do it, but that is not the way to play doubles!

Would you consider that good team-work?

Learn to think of your partner as well as of yourself. Watch the score every minute. Use your brain. Give your partner a chance to use his. Don't forget that "two heads are better than one." Remember that, on a clean score, royals are no better than hearts; it takes four of either to go game. When you have twelve on the score, royals *are* better than hearts; one will put you game with two-odd, and the other will not. The moment you reach fourteen in your score, the two suits are again equalized; two of either will give you game. Let your partner alone; don't interfere with him unless there is a reason; that is, unless you are better than he, at that score, or unless your hand would kill

his and you have a fair chance of pulling off your own bid. If you are to be beaten, in your turn, the situation is not bettered by your insistent over-call.

CHAPTER IV

A FEW ARGUMENTS AGAINST PREĒMPTIVE BIDS

IN the preceding chapter, I showed you what poor team-work was done by the pre-emptive bidder. In a former book, I described the frequent danger and the absolute futility of pre-emptive bids. They do *not* pre-empt. If the adversary has a better hand than you, he will get the bid anyhow; if he has a poorer hand than you, you might as well get your bid as cheaply as possible. The only opening-bid that could surely deprive the adversary of his bidding-privileges, is "seven no-trumps."

I do not propose to go over this ground again. But I want to show a few instances of pre-emptive bidding that I have recently witnessed, and let you judge of their results.

Here is a bid, the results of which pleased me greatly:

Z dealt himself these cards:

♥ K 2

♣ 3

♦ A K Q 10 4 2

♠ K Q 8 7

He was a pre-emptive bidder, and opened with "two diamonds," to show high honors, and that he wanted to be let alone with his suit. The score being twenty-four to nothing in his favor, the diamond bid was better than a no-trump, because of the club singleton and the short hearts.

I was playing A, and nearly fainted when I heard Z's bid, for this was my hand:

♥	A J 8 7 5
♣	10
♦	J 9 8 7 6 5 3
♠	—

Ordinarily, I should never have dreamed of hoping to force an adversary very high in diamonds, when I held seven to the jack myself, but as Z had been kind enough to announce that he held four honors and wanted to play the hand, I knew I could get him up. I bid "two hearts."

Y, relieved of the necessity of a warning-bid, wisely passed on this hand:

♥	9 4 3
♣	K Q J 9 4 2
♦	—
♠	A 4 3 2

He would have been willing to try "two clubs," but not three. He could have been set, at three.

And if Z had used the club information to go to "two no-trumps," he, in his turn, could have been set. All the hearts would have been made against him (for I should never had led hearts up to a declared stopper); I could take the fourth round of diamonds, and B could take the fourth round of spades and could stop clubs twice. Z's hand and Y's hand would not have gone well together; if there is one unusual hand in a deal the other three hands are also apt to be out of the ordinary.

Y passed the two hearts, and B, in his turn, passed with these cards:

♥	Q 10 6
♣	A 8 7 6 5
♦	—
♠	J 10 9 6 5

Then Z went to his doom with "three diamonds," which was exactly what I wanted. I doubled in order to stop B from raising the hearts. Of course I could not "double everything," but I could go back to my hearts if the adversaries changed the suit.

It is obvious that we could have made three hearts, but that would not have been game. And three were all we could take on the hand, whether I used the cross-ruff or not. Three

hearts are twenty-four; plus four honors they total fifty-six. And we made hundreds on that hand, even after Z's honors were deducted.

The trouble was all in the information given by the preëemptive bid.

I delight in having my adversaries make preëemptive bids—I love to know all they are willing to tell me. But I don't want my pupils to make them, and I certainly don't intend to use them myself.

Here is another instance of the same sort:

♥ 9 7		
♣ J 7 4 3 2		
♦ 10 8 7 6		
♠ Q 9		
♥ 8 5 4	Y	♥ A 3 2
♣ Q 10 8	A	♣ K 6 5
♦ J 4 3 2	B	♦ K 9 5
♠ A K 6	Z	♠ J 10 7 2
♥ K Q J 10 6		
♣ A 9		
♦ A Q		
♠ 8 5 4 3		

Z was another preëemptive bidder. He opened the bidding with "two hearts" to show

strength, high honors, and that he wanted to be let alone. And it looks like a very good two-heart hand; yet, if A-B play correctly, Z cannot possibly make two-odd. By the cleverest of playing he can take just the odd. A's opening lead of course, is the king of spades. Dummy goes down, showing an absolutely blank hand, unless a spade-ruff can be established, in which case Dummy is good for two tricks. It is A's business to kill those two tricks. Instead of leading spades again he should lead trumps—even though he leads up to strength. B should take with his ace and lead trumps again—thus ruining Y's possible ruff. If Z is clever enough to throw his ten of trumps on to the first round (retaining his six) Dummy's nine-spot will take the second trump round, and diamonds can be properly led—from Dummy up to Z's ten-ace. This will make one-odd possible for Z; two-odd, he cannot make, and he will take but six tricks in all, unless he plays high on the first trump round.

The preëemptive bid, again, was the cause of the trouble.

Here is a query I received on this subject:

"The dealer opened with 'two royals,' holding six spades with four honors, and general strength. The next player passed; and the dealer's partner,

holding six hearts with four honors and a singleton spade, passed also. Should he not have shown his heart-suit?"

If the dealer opens with "one royal," his partner should always over-call, holding six hearts to four honors and a singleton spade. But a preëemptive opening-bid in a major suit means that the bidder wants no information and wishes to play the hand at his own suit. His partner has no further responsibility; it is not incumbent upon him to show either strength or weakness; the situation is taken out of his hands. That is one of the bad points of pre-emptive bidding; nothing in Auction is as interesting and as subtle as the combining of the two hands—the use of the warning-bid and over-call—the judgment as to which partner is better qualified to play the hand, and which should provide the side-support. All of these points are obliterated by the preëemptive opening-bid. I can see but one thing in its possible favor—it occasionally saves time and a round or two of bids. But who wants to save time at the frequent expense of safety and at the certain cost of concerted action?

Of course, there are many hands where it is perfectly safe to open with two, but even on such hands I should rather give my partner a

chance. It is not a mistake to open with two when you are sure you can make them. Many persons use that method. But the trouble is that the preëmptive bid becomes a habit, and is often used to the detriment of the hand. Witness this proof:

Z dealt and opened with "two royals"; he held eight trumps to two honors, and these cards.

♥ J 4
♣ 10 5
♦ K
♠ A J 8 7 6 5 4 2

His partner had not a spade in his hand; he held fair clubs running to the king-queen, and the ace of hearts,—nothing else. He could have bid two clubs and made them; he did not think he had a chance to make three-odd, and his partner's preëmptive bid had told him that his responsibilities were ended. The adversaries had the remaining high cards so divided between them that neither one cared to out-bid "two royals." And Z was set,—with eight trumps in his hand. He could not lead trumps from his partner's hand to his own; the adversaries took three trump-rounds (the king, the queen, and the ten), one club-round, one diamond-round, and one heart-round,—six in all.

Had Z opened with "one royal," and had A passed, Y would have over-called with "two clubs"; and, as I remember the hand, they would have taken four-odd—their losses being confined to the ace of clubs, the ace of diamonds, and one heart-round. Thus the result of the hand would have been twenty-four plus, instead of fifty minus. Seventy-four points was the cost of the preëmptive bid. Yet it looked like an excellent two-bid—eight trumps to the ace, jack, and a side-singleton.

It is much more important that your bid should be convenient to your partner, than that it should be inconvenient to the adversaries!

If it were not that truth is stranger than fiction, I would not ask any one to believe that I actually dealt myself this hand the other night:

♥	A K Q 10 8 6 5 4 3 2
♣	A K Q
♦	—
♠	—

I confess that my first impulse was to bid "seven hearts," just to experience the sensation, and because I could not fail to make it. But sober second-thought forbade. If I bid a grand slam right off the bat, how could I hope to be doubled? I know that if I heard any one

else make such a bid I should feel sure he held the material for it, and I should never dream of doubling him (unless I knew him for an idiot).

Suppose, even, that I had the luck to be doubled. I could make my contract, but I could by no possibility get "a trick over the contract," because there are but seven-odd in a hand. I listened to the whispers of reason and bid "one heart."

A said "one royal" on this combination:

♥	J 7
♣	2
♦	A 7 5 4
♠	A K 10 9 7 3

My partner, Y, went by on this hand:

♥	—
♣	J 9 8 5 3
♦	K Q 10 3
♠	J 8 6 4

Fourth hand, B, passed; he, of course, held these cards:

♥	9
♣	10 7 6 4
♦	J 9 8 6 2
♠	Q 5 2

I went to "two hearts," and from then on

hearts and royals were bid against each other. B gave his partner one raise; it was a light one, and just within the limits of legitimacy. His guarded trump-honor was "a trick," and his singleton heart was "a raiser." However, it served to raise A's hopes, and to send him up to "four royals," with six losing cards in his hand. When I went to "five hearts," he doubled me, and my prayers were answered. He had two aces in his hand; if they took, they would make his book. If his king of spades took, if he got a ruff on the clubs, or if his partner captured one trick, the double would win.

Don't gasp when I tell you that I *did not redouble*. I passed and closed the bidding. Suppose I redoubled and he went back to royals —how could I tell that he could n't make it? Even though I covered his bid by saying "six hearts," what assurance had I that he would double me again? And, even if he did (and it would be more luck than I deserved), I could not possibly get more than one "extra trick" on a six-bid, and I was sure of two of them on a five-bid.

My profits were: Seven tricks worth 16 apiece; 50 for contract; 50 each for two extra tricks; 64 for honors; 40 for slam—a total of 366. Quite enough for one hand!

Could any preëmptive bidding have been as satisfactory as that?

If my pen were sufficiently persuasive to induce players to give up preëmptive bids and to pay due attention to the penalty score, I should rest content.

CHAPTER V

A WORD ABOUT NO-TRUMPERS

THOUGH "no-trumpers" are not bid as constantly as they were under the old count (and let us give thanks for that), they are bid on much lighter material. While suit-bids grow more conservative every day, no-trumpers grow lighter and lighter. This, of course, refers to the *opening-bid only*. A bid of "a no-trump" from any one but the dealer should be a standard bid.

The dealer bids lightly to avoid an opening-spade. (The adversaries are far more apt to bid against "a no-trump" than against "a spade".) Then he gives no specific information that is misleading; to bid in a suit declares probably the ace or king of that suit and enough other cards to count up to seven points. To bid "a no-trump" declares nothing actually, except general help. The bid is often made on three stoppers; it is made on combinations at which old Bridge players would gasp. They wanted

all the strength in the pack before they ventured on a no-trump bid.

In old Bridge, to bid no-trump was to play no-trump. In Auction this is not necessarily so. Your bid may easily be taken away from you by one of the adversaries. If neither adversary bids, your partner has probably a fair hand, which will be a help in "filling" your own. If neither adversary bids and your partner has no help, he may, at least, hold material enough for a warning-bid (five cards to an honor); and even if he has not, you may not lose more than two-odd, and that is no worse than opening with "a spade" and being left with it.

You can bid no-trump without an ace—almost an unheard-of thing in the old days! Singletons and missing suits are much greater deterrents than a lack of aces! *Even a singleton in a suit which your partner has announced is very bad.* Suppose his suit does n't clear in one round, and he has no side reentry,—then where are you? His hand is absolutely useless to you. If you don't need his hand, and simply want to know that that particular suit is not established against you, then your singleton need not worry you. But if you need his suit in order to make your bid, don't think that your one lead will necessarily be enough to clear it.

I bid opening no-trumpers on hands that are the ghosts of what we used to consider proper material for such a bid. So do all Auction players. Of course, it takes more skill to play a light hand than a safe one, and for that reason it is impossible to advise any one explicitly with regard to the lightness of a possible no-trumper until you know the degree of skill with which he plays. But this general statement may be made: *No-trumpers are growing lighter day by day, while suit-bids are growing more and more conservative.* It is a race among professional players to see who can pull off the lightest no-trumper.

The first great test of a no-trumper is whether the hand holds two unprotected suits; if it does it does not warrant a no-trump bid. One suit you may safely trust to your partner; but it would be rather optimistic to expect him to take care of two.

Blank suits are bars to no-trump bids; if "length is strength" in no-trump (and it certainly is), it follows that "shortness is weakness"; nothing, of course, is so short as a suit in which you are blank. Moreover, if you lack an entire suit, you will be apt to hold an unusual number of cards in some other suit, and that is the suit on which you should bid. Then your

blank suit will be an advantage, because you can trump it from the beginning.

Singletons weaken a no-trump hand, but do not prevent a no-trump bid. If you wait for everything you will rarely get a no-trumper. If you hold a singleton in a suit, that suit probably will be bid against your no-trumper. If it is, you can drop your bid; if it is not, it is safe to assume that your partner holds at least a stopper.

But even in the old days of standard no-trumpers it was considered possible to make the bid on an average hand that had not more than one unprotected suit. And an "average" hand was one which held this (or its equivalent):

One ace, one king, one queen, one jack, one ten, one nine, and so on down the line. Two kings and two queens could be considered the equivalent of one ace, one king, and one queen; the four cards without an ace, and the three cards with an ace, make approximately the same strength.

Now take, as example, a hand that was recently sent me by an unknown correspondent. He wanted to know what would be the proper opening-bid on such a hand, and said that he often held similar ones, that they seemed too good for "a spade," yet certainly not good enough for "a no-trump." Such hands would

certainly *not* have been good enough for "a no-trump" in the old days, before warning-bids were discovered and before adversaries had grown wise enough to leave you "in" with "a spade." Neither should I advise no-trump bids on such hands, from any player who was not *forced* to bid; but, as dealer, I should never hesitate to say "one no-trump."

♥ K Q 9 8
♣ J
♦ J 10 5 3
♠ A 6 3 2

The singleton jack of clubs is the weakest point in that hand. All other face-cards are properly guarded.

First ask yourself, "Is there more than one unprotected suit?" and the answer, of course, is "No." Clubs are the only suit in which the hand does not hold protection. Four diamonds to the jack might not prove a stopper if the card next to the jack did not happen to be the ten-spot, but it is, and a sequence-stopper is always safe.

Then put the "average" test to the hand, and you will find that it holds:

One ace, one king, one queen, two jacks (one more than the average), one ten, one nine, one eight, one six, one five, two threes, and one

two. It lacks only a seven and a four, and in their places it holds a jack and a three; the three is but one point lower than a four, and the jack is four points higher than a seven; the hand is, therefore, three points above the average; it holds but one unprotected suit; it is thus a no-trumper.

When it comes to hands that are under the standard, it is impossible, as I said before, to give any hard-and-fast law as to how light the bid may be. Personally, I bid no-trumps on the sketchiest kind of hands, unless I am well ahead and playing conservatively in consequence. An ace in one suit, a protected king in another, and a protected queen in a third, will always elicit a no-trump bid from me—particularly if there be a jack or ten thrown in somewhere. Two guarded kings and two guarded queens, scattered through three different suits, is another no-trump combination.

Here is another interesting no-trump query that I received:

The dealer dealt himself the following cards:

♥	A
♣	K 10 4
♦	Q J 10 9 8 7 6 2
♠	A

He opened with "a no-trump," because it was much too good for "a spade," and because he had heard so many criticisms on queen-bids that he was unwilling to say "a diamond." The questions put to me were: First, was the no-trump bid warranted? Second, was the diamond bid barred? And, third, if a diamond bid were correct, should it be one, or two?

I am simply delighted with the opportunities presented by this hand to illustrate the great principles of sound bidding, and I will answer the queries in order.

First, the no-trump bid was thoroughly bad. Never bid "a no-trump" on a hand that holds two singletons; even though they are aces, they are still singletons. If the diamond suit were "established" (that is, if it held all the top cards), it would be safe to bid the no-trump because when you took the first heart-round, or spade-round, you would have a long suit ready and waiting, and the fact that you had no more hearts, or spades, would n't hurt you.

But with a long suit that needed establishing, the no-trump bid was too risky. Provided it were allowed to stand, the adversary would be almost sure to lead a heart or a spade—thus pulling the dealer's singleton on the first round. Before the diamond suit was established the

adversaries would be more than apt to take one round and to return to their original lead. Then what about the no-trumper?

With a declared trump, singleton side-aces are wonderful helps. They mean that you will never lose a round of that suit; you will take the first round and trump all subsequent rounds. But in no-trump, a singleton ace means that you must lose every round of a suit except the first. You see the difference between losing no round, and losing every round but one!

That answers the first question; no no-trump bids on hands that hold two singletons. The next two questions I will answer together: Was a diamond-bid justifiable, and should it have been one or two?

A diamond-bid was more than justifiable, it was imperative. From the very beginning I have always insisted upon allowing queen-bids if they were "wonderfully long, held an honor or honors other than the queen, and if the hand held outside strength such as aces, kings, or ruffs."

Just see how the present hand fulfills all these conditions!

But I have warned you that having bid on a queen-suit, you may deceive your partner in regard to no-trump bids or doubles; if he at-

tempts either of these, go back to your queen-suit once, to warn him that it is a long weak suit, useful as trumps, but lacking the top cards which are necessary in no-trumps or in doubles.

Open that hand with "one diamond." Never open with two to show a long weak suit; it is a thoroughly unsound method. It assumes a heavier contract than is necessary, and gives your partner less chance to change the bid if it does not suit his hand. Open with one, and if no one bids against you, you have a light contract; also, if your partner wants to change the suit, he has but to exceed seven points. But if he goes to no-trump, he may be trusting you for the high diamonds. Change his no-trump to "two diamonds," and at once your story is told. You have made a "backward" bid, which is a signal of weakness in his suit—and his suit (in no-trump) is aces and kings.

Don't you see how much more sensible it is? Your two-bid means weakness, but you save it until the second round, and often you don't have to make it at all. If your partner passes, or if he bids anything but no-trump, your one-bid is all right. If he says no-trump, then, and then only, the two-bid becomes necessary, and it is no heavier than if you had bid it on the first round.

If your partner returns to his no-trump, it shows that he is not inconvenienced by the fact that you lack the high diamonds. Then let him alone; don't continue to bid against him, after you have given him the one warning that was demanded of you.

With any unpleasant and difficult task, it is certainly much wiser to wait and see whether it is going to be necessary to undertake it, rather than to assume it at once for fear it might some day become necessary. So with a two-bid!

This next query came to me from Illinois:
"Will you please tell me how to bid the following hand on an opening-bid:

♥	Q J 5 3
♣	A 7 2
♦	A 5 3
♠	A 3 2

"The dealer bid it 'one heart'; her partner got the bid at 'two diamonds,' and afterward said the dealer should have declared a 'no-trump.' I (the writer) should have opened with 'one spade,' to find where the cards were. I consider it a very poor no-trumper, and an equally poor heart. What do you think?"

There is no possible question about that bid;

it is distinctly a "no-trumper," and nothing else I will show you why it is a no-trumper, and why it is not a heart nor a spade bid. Every hand should be bid on the best suit possible; sometimes, when you have your choice of two suits, the score will make the lower suit advisable—as when your hand would permit either hearts or no-trump, and you have eight on the score. Then I should choose the hearts (particularly if I held good honors,) because a suit-bid is generally safer than a no-trump, and because the score makes game with three-odd, whether you play it at hearts or at no-trumps. In other words, the score destroys the no-trump precedence.

The score is not given on this hand, but it would make no difference, for there is no question of choice. The hand says "yes" to all no-trump tests, and "no" to all suit-tests.

Are there two unprotected suits in that hand? There are not; there is not even one. Every suit is definitely stopped.

Does it bear the "average" test—(*i.e.*, one ace, one king, one queen, one jack, etc.)? It stands well above this test; instead of an ace, one king, one queen, one jack—it holds three aces, a queen, and a jack. It holds, therefore, an ace in place of a king, and an extra ace to

cover the deficiency in tens and nines. It is well above the average.

Does it hold honors? Yes—thirty of them.

Why, then, is it not a no-trumper? The no-trump declaration will start up the bidding, where a spade declaration would silence it. It will force the adversaries to two in anything. And it will debar them from an adverse no-trumper.

A heart bid should be headed by the ace or king (queen, at a pinch, when the suit is unusually long and the hand holds side-ruffs). But, in addition to ace or king, the hearts must come to seven points—counting two points for every honor and one point for every plain card. This hand comes to six points and holds neither ace nor king. It is an absolutely impossible heart declaration.

If this hand were not opened with a no-trump it would have to be bid at "one spade"—and it is far too good for so misleading a bid. Never bid "a spade" unless you have to; it is shirking legitimate responsibility to bid it on such cards. The practice of bidding a spade "to wait and see" is dead, killed by the fact that you won't see anything. Players used to be sufficiently obliging as to furnish dealers with desired information; now they have grown wiser.

And that is another argument against taking the dealer out of "a spade"; it destroys his chances of sitting round to find out what the others hold, and makes the "forced bid" a real thing—just as it was intended to be. Bidding "a spade" to wait is old-fashioned; and bidding against a waiting spade is equally old-fashioned. The former bid cannot live unless the latter bid supports it.

There is no distinct "call" for no-trumps, to-day. The two-spade call, as I shall explain in a later chapter, calls equally for royals and no-trumps. And, in any case, no player should *call* when he is able to *bid*. It is a little too much to hold a perfectly good no-trump hand, and to ask your partner to be the one to bid no-trumps. Moreover, you expose the stronger hand (as Dummy) and that is always a mistake.

There used to be a question asked me constantly: "Is it obligatory to bid no-trumps, holding three aces and not another trick?"

There are no "obligatory" bids. The hand in question is the most hopeless form of no-trumper; yet it is a hand on which I, personally, should always bid either a no-trump, or a nullo. I should never waste three aces on a spade.

If the cards under the aces were sevens, eights, nines, and tens, I should choose the

no-trump bid (provided the hand offered no seven-point suit-bid). If the cards under the aces were deuces, treys, fours, fives, and sixes (in preponderance, I mean), my bid would certainly be "one nullo." True, my thirty aces would then count for the adversaries; but thirty honor-points are not overwhelmingly valuable; and, by bidding a no-trump on such a hand and striking a combination in my partner's hand that offered neither help nor warning-bid,—I might lose several hundred honor-points.

Now a word as to the proper time to play no-trump hands. Bid them on slight materials to avoid a spade-bid, and play them on slight materials on a clean score—for the reason that no-trump is then the only suit that will put you game with three-odd. But the moment you have scored, choose, in preference to no-trump, any suit-bid that will put you game in just as few tricks. For instance, if you have as much as three on the score, three royals (27) will put you game just as much as three no-trumps. I should choose the royal in preference. I should always play a suit-bid rather than a no-trumper—unless the latter was phenomenal. The moment there was six on my score I should play either hearts or royals in preference to no-trumps (three of

any of them would put you game); and with twelve on the score I should take any good suit-bid rather than the no-trump.

After the opening-bid, no player should bid no-trumps unless he has proper material. After a suit-bid by the adversary, no player should bid no-trump unless he stops that suit. This is the one unbreakable rule. *Never bid no-trump unless you stop the adversary's suit!*

The light no-trumpers with which dealers now open, should make third-hands very careful about raising. The dealer may feel that, with ordinary help, he can just about squeeze out the odd; he may be totally unable to take two odd.

If the dealer opens with a no-trump and second-hand over-calls with two in some suit, third-hand should hold more than a stopper in that suit, in order to say two no-trumps. He should hold such a stopper and two other possible tricks.

If the dealer raises his own no-trump once, he marks it as a standard bid. Third-hand can then raise it once on "one trick and one raiser," and an additional once for every additional raiser he holds. "Tricks" and "raisers" in no-trumps are any properly-guarded honors.

If the dealer opens with "one no-trump" it is not an unheard-of thing for one of the adver-

saries to answer with "two no-trumps." This is sometimes advisable, but generally risky. If a player wants to save rubber, and has a general hand on which he could not possibly bid two in any suit, he should bid "two no-trumps" against an adverse "one no-trump." He is in a better position to do this if he sits on the *left* of the original no-trump hand than if he sits on its right. It is supposed to be worth a trick or two to have the privilege of playing the hand and to make the adversary discard on one's own long suits. But I should not advise this bid in any but the most compelling circumstances and to any players who are not fairly expert.

While there is a certain fascination about a no-trump hand, I think it is usually conceded to be the easiest hand to play. And certainly it is the hardest hand to save when things go wrong. Give me a suit-bid, if I am to play a shaky hand.

One of the greatest of French poets was asked if it were not very difficult to write a poem, and he replied: "Difficult? Not in the least! It is either easy or impossible!"

I think I never heard a better epigram, and it comes into my mind whenever I watch, or play, a no-trump hand. A no-trump is always "easy or impossible," and there is nothing quite so sad in life as a no-trump hand gone wrong.

CHAPTER VI

THE TWO-SPADE CALL — PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

MANY letters come to me asking whether the dislike that many players feel for the high-spade bids (*i.e.*, "three spades," "four spades," "five spades," etc.), will make it necessary to drop the "two-spade" bid as well.

I do not believe that the "two-spade" bid will ever disappear. It antedated the other spade-bids by several years, and it is far too popular to be lightly relinquished. I never use it and never miss it, but almost every one else is devoted to it. The great trouble is that it means different things in different places, thus causing confusion.

I never knew Auction without a "two-spade" bid. I played the game before it was generally known in America, and even when I first learned it I was taught that "two spades was a call for no-trumps" and was made on a general hand that was almost, but not quite, a no-trumper.

Later, a great deal of discussion arose among the various authorities as to whether, or not, the spade-suit must be stopped in order to make the call. I had been taught to bid "two spades" on a hand of general assistance, even though the spades were not stopped. I think now that that was a mistake, even under the old count.

Of course, in those days, a no-trump call was a necessity. The black suits were so low as scarcely to exist, and one red suit (diamonds) counted only what our lowest suit (clubs) counts now. No-trumps were worth twelve instead of ten; they were considerably more valuable than anything we have to-day, and all other suits (save hearts) were considerably lower than they are to-day. Therefore, Auction was a no-trump race, and the call was almost a necessity.

Then came the new count and overturned our previous ideas. No-trump was still the highest suit, and the only one that would put you game with three-odd, on a clean score. But it had lost its original prestige and the suits had all gained in value. The new suit of royals was almost as tempting as no-trumps, but one point less valuable, exceedingly worth while in regard to its honors, and possessed the added charm of novelty. The game regained its lost variety;

we had almost forgotten how to play suit-bids and were getting a shade weary of no-trumpers.

The next discovery was that we could bid no-trumpers on almost nothing, because we were giving our partners no definite and misleading information; because it forced the adversaries to a two-bid; because "warning-bids" had been invented for the use of partners who were unable to assist in no-trumps; and because to bid no-trumps was not necessarily to play no-trumps—as it used to be in Bridge. The chances were largely that some one would believe you of your contract. Suit-bids became more and more conservative every day, for the reason that they gave definite information regarding one suit, and that information must be true, or raises from a trusting partner might come to grief. But no-trump was bid on hands which formerly would have warranted nothing but a "call." Therefore the necessity for the "two-spade" bid in its original form disappeared.

Nevertheless, that is what "two spades" means to-day to three persons out of five—"a general assisting hand with a stopper in spades, not quite strong enough for a no-trump bid, but extending a no-trump invitation to partner."

One of the greatest of American authorities is responsible for the newer "two-spade" call.

He says it should mean "two quick tricks in spades and another ace." And that, I am sure, is the most useful form for the bid. That is what it would mean from me if I used it; strange, as it may seem, I have never yet had occasion to use it; I have never held "two quick tricks in spades and another ace" without holding enough other cards to warrant either a royal bid or a no-trump bid. But should those particular cards come to me I should certainly bid "two spades" if I were with players who demanded it, and "one spade" otherwise.

Here are some typical "two-spade" hands:

♥	A 7 6 3
♣	9 8 2
♦	10 5 3
♠	A K 4

No one could possibly bid "a no-trump" on such a hand as that; I should bid it "a spade"; but there are those who think it too good for "a spade," as it holds three virtually sure tricks.

♥	J 7
♣	A 9 8 6
♦	6 4 3
♠	K Q 7 3

♥ 9 8
♣ J 4 3
♦ A 6 5 4 2
♠ A Q J

Both those hands must be bid "one spade," or "two spades." There is no other possible bid. The first might be opened with "a nullo"—but it would be very unsafe; and the second would never warrant a "nullo"-bid—the spade-suit would kill it.

In no case must a dealer be "left in" with a two-spade call. If the following adversary does not bid, the dealer's partner must. And on this newer call, it is either an invitation to no-trumps or royals, and the partner must respond according to his own cards.

In that fact lies my dislike of conventional calls, the fact that third-hand's bid is absolutely forced. If my adversary makes a conventional bid, I never bid and help him out. I leave that to his poor partner and reserve my own bid for a later round.

The author of a recent book on Auction still adheres to the old two-spade call on a general hand with spades stopped. But I am quite sure that the most popular significance among first-grade players is the one I have just given

you—"two quick tricks in spades and another ace."

A few players use the no-trump *call* on hands that demand a no-trump *bid*. That is shirking legitimate responsibility; it is demanding a good deal to ask your partner to bid no-trumps when you should do it yourself.

Now, knowing these various ideas regarding the two-spade call, I was placed the other day in the following position: I was playing in a strange place with a partner and two adversaries whose game I did not know. At another table were four players whose game was also unknown to me; and from that table was brought me the following hand, with this question: "What must I bid on this hand when my partner said 'Two spades' and the second hand passed?"

♥	7 5
♣	J 10 9 6
♦	9 4 3
♠	10 8 7 5

I advised a bid of "one royal," although it was obvious that if the call had been made on rather weak general support and one spade stopper there was very slight chance of doing much with the hand. The royal-bid stood as

final, and the declarant scored two-odd; but this is the hand that was laid down by the player who had opened with "two spades":

♥ A 10 9
♣ A 5 4
♦ A 10 8
♠ J 9 6 3

So you see that though the call is usually accepted as an invitation to no-trump, it is a little difficult to judge on what it has been made. And when the third-hand is caught with poor cards, yet knows his bid is demanded of him, he may be in a rather uncomfortable position. When so placed, the safest bid is "one royal"; it reduces the contract to one-odd instead of two, and you know, at least, that your partner has a stopper in the suit. But with fewer than two spades in your hand, you cannot respond with a royal-bid; and even with two it is a risk.

Thus, it will be seen that in the past, the "two-spade" call was a definite and comprehensible bid; it meant a generally assisting hand, with spades stopped,—and asked for a no-trump bid from partner. That bid is useless now, because we *bid* no-trumps, on such a hand, instead of *calling* for it.

In the present, the "two-spade" call is unhappily conglomerate. It *may* mean what it used to mean; or it *may* mean a perfectly good no-trump bid; or it *may* mean, "two quick tricks in spades, and another ace."

The latter combination should be, I am sure, its future meaning. As long as the partner of the "two-spade" bidder is forced to respond, he should know to what he is responding. I greatly dislike that point about all conventional bids; to be safe, to be an aid, they must, perforce, be specific. And "specific information by word of mouth," seems incongruous, to me, with the highest card ethics.

CHAPTER VII

“PASSING A SPADE”

ONE of the least-appreciated privileges in Auction is “passing a spade.” Those who have grasped it, love it; but the name of those who have failed to grasp it, is Legion.

Bid against the dealer’s “one spade” if you have a chance of going game on your hand, or if you have high honors that you want to harvest, *not otherwise*. Not on any mediocre hand, and not to “give information.” The dealer is in a hole; let his partner be the one to throw him a rope; that is not your duty.

Bid if you can go game. A game is always worth more than the spade penalty. A game is half of a rubber, and a rubber is worth 250. Therefore a game is intrinsically worth 125. That is 25 points more than the spade penalty, and you have your trick and honor values in addition.

But *partial* games are very uncertain things and are apt to offer many disappointments.

Take them if you can get nothing better, but remember that the spade penalty is always better.

To take a number of successive spade penalties is to make even the rubber value look small. I saw a curious game recently. On the first hand of the rubber, Z bid "a spade"; A-B could have taken two-odd in royals, instead of which they played against the spade and made 100. The next hand was an unusual one, and A took simply the odd in hearts, and that after a tussle. The third hand was an exact repetition of the first, and gave A-B another hundred. And on each of the two succeeding deals they went "game in the hand" first on five-odd in royals with 72 honors, and then on a no-trump grand slam with 100 aces. Thus their total for the rubber was 831, and at the end of it they cut in again for partners.

And just here is the flaw in all the arguments I have ever heard against passing "a spade." They all presuppose that the same two players are to play together continuously. If A-B (in the game just described) had followed the plan of declaring against a spade they would have scored 18 on the first deal (two-odd in royals), 8 points and 16 honors on the second deal, 18 points again on the third deal, and one game

would have been over. The next hand they would have gone rubber with 45 points and 72 honors. And the rubber would have been worth 427 instead of 831. For one or the other of them that third game would not have existed, as an asset.

Considering A and B as members of a firm, they closed their partnership 404 points richer each than they would have been had they bid against "a spade." That 404 was "real money," which would prove either a mitigation of future losses or a nucleus for future gains. And it was made by passing "a spade," laying up 100 points, and keeping the rubber open for a longer time.

It would be idiocy to "keep a rubber open" if you were losing. But if you are laying up 100 neat little points on each hand that causes the delay, you can continue that delay indefinitely. You will soon reach the point where the other side cannot "afford" to go rubber, where to do so would be a loss. Even if luck changes and the adversaries take rubber, you are still the winners. And if the luck does not change, you take an enormous rubber. And there is no more reason why it should change than why it should continue.

Of course, if it changes and *you* get spade declarations, while the adversaries are clever

enough not to declare against you, then you lose your winnings and every one is back at the starting point, with nothing lost but time. And that is the worst that can happen to you when you lay up "velvet."

Play is chance. The man who is afraid to take a chance should never play. He should stay out. Our reason for playing (apart from the mental enjoyment) is that we hope each hand is going to be good to us. Now if we get a hand that *is* good to us, so good as to offer us 100 easily won points, why not profit by the chance?

Every short sure rubber is a low one. There are but two types of men who play for them, one is the overcautious man and the other is the man who holds a penny so close to his eyes that he cannot see a dollar a yard away.

Remember this when you hear arguments against passing a spade; they are either based on the supposition that two partners are to play together continuously, or they take it for granted that each deal would have been "game in the hand" instead of a partial game. And from the beginning I have urged you to bid your hand whenever you saw the chance of going game on it.

Suppose you bid against the dealer's spade, score 18 points, and the "luck changes." You

have 18 with which to discount your subsequent bad luck; suppose, instead, that you defeat the spade, take 100 points, and the luck changes; you are 82 points richer than you would otherwise be. The player who fails to seize such opportunities loses many valuable chances.

To take an extreme example. Suppose you get all your good cards on the adversaries' deals—and suppose you could go rubber on four such deals (your own intermediate deals being mediocre ones on which you or your opponents score but the odd), three hands to a game is not an unusual allowance. Now, suppose that on each of those four hands you do not bid—seeing that you have no wonderful honors and cannot hope to go game—and that each time you score the extreme spade penalty. Then the four hands will bring you 400 points, whereas, if you bid and went rubber the 250, plus your trick and honor values, could not total 400. And, in addition to this, the rubber is still open; you have as good a chance to win it as you ever had, and it is enhanced by 400 extra points.

Which is greater, one five-hundred or five one-hundreds?

The average school child will tell you that they are equal, and the average school child will be right.

But the average Auction player (judging from his game) will insist that one five-hundred is infinitely greater than five one-hundreds; he will clasp the former to his bosom with joy, but will turn up a scornful nose when Fate offers him the latter!

To leave the adversaries "in with a spade" five times, and to score the extreme spade-penalty, is to get 500 of the easiest points you ever got in your life.

Why is it a joyful thing to get 90 honors in royals, or 80 honors in hearts, and a negligible thing to get 100 honors by leaving the adversary in with "a spade"? Of course, if you can go game on the royal hand, or the heart hand, its value is immensely increased; then you must bid. But I am thinking of the hands where players are content to make only a couple of odd tricks in order to score honors—or of those other hands when they are willing to be set in order to harvest such honors; and they are right—anything which puts you on the plus side of a hand is good—provided you do not lose something better by taking it. But why should it please any one to take 90 minus 50, and displease him to take 100 minus nothing?

Again, why is it more comforting to set the adversary for two-odd, on a bid of "five no-

trumps," than to set him for two-odd on a bid of "one-spade"? In the first instance he has a mighty good hand and has made the bid because he wanted to; in the second instance he has a mighty poor hand and has made the bid because he had to.

When the dealer declares "a spade" I (as second hand) always pass, unless I have a fair chance of going "game in the hand," or unless I have good honors in a high suit. Otherwise I decline to bid; even though my own hand does not promise a spade defeat—and its attendant 50 or 100 honor points—there is no reason to suppose that my partner's hand will not beat the spade, provided third hand passes also. If third hand bids, every one at the table has another chance. I should rather have 50 points (or 100) than 6 points (or 12) even though the latter were below the line and the former above it. But—if those six points, or twelve points, would put me game—I should infinitely prefer them to the spade penalty. With 16 or 18 on the score I should always bid "a club" against the dealer's "one spade"—if I held fair clubs. With nothing on the score I should certainly *not* bid "a club" against an opening spade.

Every one, I think, agrees that *fourth-hand*

should "pass a spade," unless he holds high honors, or sees a chance of game; but opinions vary as to whether second-hand should pursue the same course; many players think that second-hand should declare a fair holding in a minor suit (clubs or diamonds) even on a clean score; because, with this club or diamond information, the partner of second-hand may be enabled to declare an otherwise impossible no-trumper, and to take game.

I see the force of this argument, and I have no wish to influence any player who prefers that method. But for myself, I utterly decline to bid against "a spade"—whether I sit second or fourth—unless my bid looks like game or carries high honors with it. I have seen too many good hundreds harvested by "passing a spade"; I have seen too many bids kept open—and the dealer given a much-desired chance to bid a long jack-suit or queen-suit, on the second round, simply by second-hand's obliging willingness to come to the rescue. It is delightfully easy to play against antagonists who are good enough to take you out of a spade-bid; whenever a difficult situation presents itself you can bid "a spade" with perfect safety—secure in the knowledge that *some one* will rush to the rescue. But if you know that your chance of rescuers

is limited to one—*i.e.*, your partner—you will have to wake up and assume your own responsibilities. Give me adversaries who will bid against "a spade," and a partner who won't, and I will be content.

CHAPTER VIII

EXPOSED CARDS

So many inquiries come to me on the subject of "exposed" cards, so little explicit information concerning them seems to have been written, that, I am going to make them the text of this chapter.

One correspondent writes me that "not even in Hoyle or the Century Dictionary" can he find just what he wants to know about the proper penalizing and playing of exposed cards.

A card is "exposed" when its face is shown *on*, or *above*, the level of the table. But not all four players at a table suffer similarly for exposing a card. The Declarant, for instance, is absolutely immune from punishment, for the reason that he has no partner to be advantaged by seeing his cards; and Dummy, of course, is always exposed. It is the two persons who are playing against the deal who must be abnormally careful about showing cards.

If the Declarant shows a card it is supposed

to give information to two adversaries and to no partner—for the reason that the Declarant's partner is Dummy ("le mort," or "the dead man," as the French call him); therefore the Declarant suffers no further punishment than the fact that he has been foolish enough to let both his adversaries see his card, and to put them in the position where they can play accordingly. No card that the Declarant exposes, can be "called"; the only card that he can be forced to play from his own hand is one which he has voluntarily "quitted" (that is, from which he has voluntarily removed his fingers). He can throw his entire hand, face-up, on the table and play it from that position—if he is fool enough to want to do so.

And, what is more, no one of those exposed cards can be called by either adversary. The Declarant is not at liberty to pick up a hand that he has thus thrown down, but he can play it from that position at his own discretion and with no other penalty than the fact that the adversaries can take advantage of it. For that reason the Declarant alone is the one who can safely "claim the balance of the tricks" toward the close of a hand, and show down his remaining cards in support of his claim. Either adversary who does this runs the risk of being forced

to leave his cards on the table and being made to play them as the Declarant dictates; they can all be "called" (at the Declarant's pleasure) and must be played as called, as, in this case, the Declarant can claim that the other adversary has been helped by seeing his partner's hand.

While it is true that the Declarant has this tremendous license as far as the cards that he holds in his own hand are concerned—and that he can shove them out and push them back as much as he likes—it is not true concerning the cards that he plays from Dummy. *A touched card in Dummy should always be a played card and can always be called by the adversaries.*

This rule is tremendously disregarded; players will insist "I did n't take my fingers off"; where that idea originated is a puzzle to me. It does n't matter one iota whether or not you "take your fingers off"; the point is that you have put your fingers on. Having once done that in Dummy, the card is played; and having once relinquished a card from your own hand (if you are the Declarant) you must never take it back.

The Declarant is at liberty to readjust Dummy cards if he preface the act with the words, "I arrange," or words to that effect; otherwise he must keep his fingers off them unless he means to play them. It is an easy thing

to acquire the habit of keeping one's hand poised above the cards while making a difficult decision, rather than of allowing it to rest on any one card. There is nothing I detest more than a person who touches a card in Dummy, meaning to play it, and then changes his mind and plays a different one. Yes, perhaps there is one person that is worse, and that is the person who turns over back tricks and looks at them. A trick that is once quitted should never be turned again till the end of the hand. Both these rules are constantly broken by careless players and by crafty ones, for the reason that no penalty is provided for the situation.

A true sport realizes that it is worse to commit a breach of etiquette, where the adversary has no redress, than to break a rule where he can get even by taking a specified penalty. Some day, I hope, penalties will be provided for both these situations.

But to return to our sheep—exposed cards by the adversaries of the Declarant are entirely at the Declarant's mercy. If either adversary shows a card so that the Declarant alone can see it, and by no physical possibility could the other adversary see it, that card is not "exposed" and cannot be called by the Declarant, even though he can name its face. He can take the

advantage of having seen the card and can play accordingly; but he cannot "call" it.

If, on the contrary, either adversary show a card on or above the level of the table so that his partner might have seen it (even though that partner vows that he did n't) that card is "exposed" and must be laid face-up on the table. The Declarant can call it and force its play, except to make its owner revoke with it. For instance, one adversary may "expose" the ace of clubs; he must then lay it on the table, face-up. His partner may lead the king of hearts, and the Declarant will "call" the club ace; its owner will reply, "No, I have a heart," and will play his heart. Then the partner may lead the ace of hearts, and again the Declarant will call the ace of clubs, which must be played unless its owner holds another heart. And the calling of this exposed card can be repeated until it is played. On the other hand, *its owner is always at liberty to play it without waiting to have it called*; and about this point there seems to be misunderstanding. You *must* play an exposed card when the Declarant calls it (except to revoke with it) but you *may* play it without waiting to have it called. In the case just given, where one adversary has exposed the ace of clubs, if the other adversary is wise

enough to lead a low club the owner of the ace is at liberty to play it, even though it is exposed, and is not called by the Declarant.

In other words, the Declarant can force his adversary to *play* an exposed card, but not to *retain* it.

Be very careful, in playing against the declaration, never to expose a card and never to claim "the balance of the tricks." And be very careful, if you are the Declarant, not to touch one of Dummy's cards and fail to play it, and not to turn over tricks that have been quitted. For the last offense there is no law that will punish you, but you are committing a serious breach of sportsmanship and etiquette.

CHAPTER IX

THE TWO GREAT FLAWS OF THE AVERAGE GAME

AUCTION possesses two attributes that were foreign to Bridge,—the bid, and the penalty-field. The over-appreciation of the first of these, and the under-appreciation of the second, form the two great flaws in the average game of Auction.

No one fails to be impressed by the opportunities presented by the bid; no-one needs to be urged to take advantage of this privilege. There is scarcely one person in a hundred who does not over-bid. Players grip the bid between their teeth, and *nothing* will persuade them to relinquish it. They remind me of bull-dogs in the pertinacity of their hold.

I have had pupils to whom I have refused to give another lesson, because nothing could persuade them to stop bidding; and, until they learned to stop, there was no hope for their game. They would die, bidding. Evidently they would rather *lose* hundreds by playing the hand, than *make* hundreds by defeating it.

It is an attitude of mind that I cannot grasp. At first, I thought it excusable on the ground of novelty; it was so new and exciting to be able to play the hand—whether we dealt it or not,—that we could not forego the pleasure. But then,—it was also new and exciting to be able to score *fifty* a trick for defeating the bid! Fifty was an unheard-of trick-value in Bridge; the rubber, and four aces in one hand, were worth one hundred each. Five heart-honors in one hand counted eighty, and five diamond-honors sixty. And how often did such aces or such honors, come to us? Not once in a hundred deals; we gasped with joy when we held them, and *we were entirely dependent on luck, for such holdings.* Then, with Auction, came the chance of gathering in the fifties in bunches, on hands of scarcely more than average strength—on hands that we held frequently—and no one seemed to consider them worth a thought.

My next idea was that proper instruction would certainly weed out this fault. And for three years I have talked, and taught, and written,—written, and taught, and talked,—till I have finally decided that there is one lesson the average player will never learn, and that is, the art of passing on good cards.

"Learn to say no," is considered a valuable lesson in life at large. I wish it could be more generally applied at the Auction table!

The object of Auction is not to play the most hands; it is to make the most you can, on your cards. Can you make more when you get fifty a trick, or when you get eight?

I know the old objection,—the fifty is "above the line," and the eight is below it. What of that? The fifty points will be fifty cents to you, when you come to settle,—and the eight points will be eight cents,—it matters not where they are.

Of course, the eight points will help you win the rubber, and the fifty points will not. *But the rubber itself is in that despised position,—above the line!* It is only two hundred and fifty points above the line,—this wonderful Mecca of the average player. By paying proper attention to the penalty-possibilities, it is often easy to lay up several hundreds and to discount the rubber itself. Take all the fifties, all the hundreds, that come your way. Choose game in preference to one hundred penalties, and rubber in preference to two hundred penalties. But take *any* penalties in preference to a partial game, and try to remember this point:

Nothing in Auction offers you such valuable opportunities as the penalty-field!

A well-known financier has written me twice on this subject. If I were at liberty to quote his name, you would realize that what he says about figures, is final. And this is it:

"It seems to me that the penalties are too great as the game is played. A man who bids 'one heart' is betting six to one that he will make it; on a bid of 'one club,' he is betting eight to one; and on a bid of 'one spade,' he is betting twenty-five to one.

"Again, the chances are almost three to one, against him, on a bid of 'three clubs'; they are two and a half to one, against him, on a bid of 'three diamonds'; and they are two to one, against him, on a bid of 'three hearts.' And three-odd are rather difficult to make!"

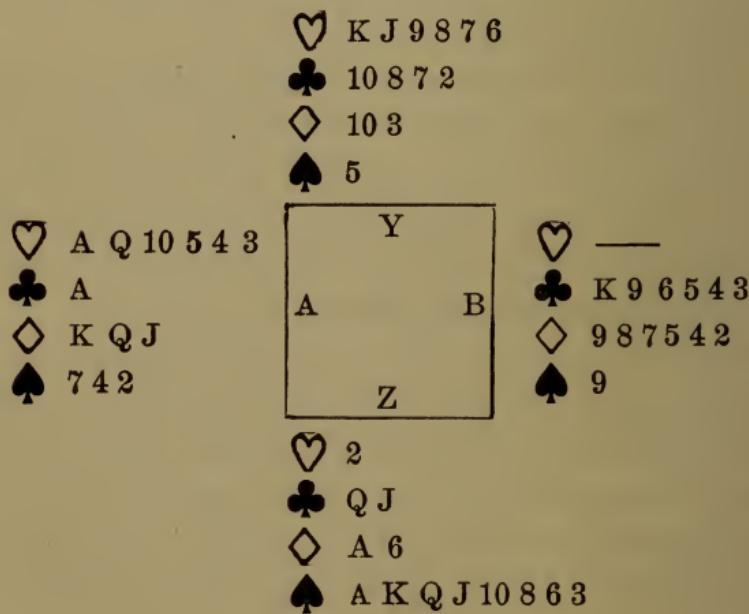
There it lies, you see, in actual figures! Yet players prefer to take the small chance, with the small profits, and have the "fun of playing the hand"; rather than take the greater chance, with the bigger profits, by defeating the make. And all because they are unduly impressed by a crossline on the score-card!

When you play below the line you play with a specific object—to get 250 above the line. Now, if 250 above the line is such a valuable asset, why is 300 or 400 above the line less valuable?

I do not mean to belittle the play of the hand.

But there is no necessity for me to urge that on players who already over-do it. If you are driving a horse that pulls to the right, you bear on the left rein. And I find it very necessary to bear on this "penalty-rein."

I was playing, one day, with a partner who held a wonderful hand. He was "Z," and I was "Y," in the accompanying diagram:



It was a clean score, on the first game.

My partner opened with "two royals,"—being a preëmptive bidder. The following adversary answered with "three hearts"; I passed,—from pleasure. B, also passed; and

my partner said "three royals." A answered with "four hearts," and I doubled,—both to keep my partner from making a royal-bid that could not possibly be as valuable as my double,—and because I did not believe any one could make five diamonds or six clubs.

My partner was so impressed with his ninety honors, that he over-called my double with "four royals."

One of my doubled tricks would have beaten his ninety honors; two of my doubled tricks would have beaten a grand slam in royals with ninety honors; and three of my doubled tricks would have beaten the rubber, itself. My tricks began to score by hundreds, as soon as we had taken in three; his tricks began to score, by nines, only after we had taken in six!

Now, he had no possible chance of rubber,—as it was the first game. If he made a grand slam, he would score 63 for tricks, 40 for slam, and 90 for honors; a total of 193 for thirteen tricks. And I could score 200 for five tricks. Of course, however, he would be game-in, on his grand slam,—if he made it!

As a matter of fact he made 27 points and 90 honors, a total of 117 points on the hand; and *not* a game! He lost one heart-round, two clubs, and a diamond.

Had I been allowed to play against the hearts, I should have led my singleton spade. My partner would have taken three spade-rounds; he could then have led a heart through the making-hand, or the jack of spades,—to permit me to over-trump. Let us suppose that he led the latter. A would hardly trump with his ace; if he did, I would discard. If he trumped with anything else, I could over-trump. I could then lead my short-suit (diamonds) in order to trump later. My partner could come in with the ace, and lead the ten of spades.

I should have made 600 on that hand, and he chose to make 117. Do you call that good Auction? Why could he not have trusted my judgment? Certainly the "fun of playing the hand," was not worth 483 points.

Again, his 90 honors (with which he was so impressed) were "above the line," just as much as were my doubled tricks. Give me six hundred points on one hand, and I will give you the rubber on the next two hands, and will be extremely happy to call it square! The more I play Auction, the more I watch others play it, the more firmly am I convinced of this; that, while good playing is not infrequent, good bidding is extremely rare; good doubling is almost never found (in the average run of

players) and good passing is an art that has yet to be acquired.

Here are some conspicuous mistakes which I have recently seen made by persons who have the reputation of playing a game that is well above the average; in no case did the score make any unusual demands upon either side.

The dealer, Z, declared "a royal"; second hand, A, considered his hand "too good to pass," so bid "two clubs," on this combination:

♥ A 9 8
♣ K Q 9 7
♦ A 3
♠ 9 8 7 6

That was distinctly bad. A, not being forced to bid, should have passed. His hand made it probable that Z could not have taken game in royals—for the score was love-all. If Z got the bid at "one royal," A should have led his ace of diamonds, if his partner gave a "come-on" card (showing the king) A should have led again, and been ready to ruff the third round. Or, his first lead might have been the king of clubs—"from two honors that touch."

Any dealer holding A's hand should open with "a no-trump," because his bid is then forced.

The hand holds but one unprotected suit, and is three points above the average; it holds two aces and two nines, instead of one ace, one jack, one ten, and one nine. It would make an excellent opening no-trumper. But the moment Z bid royals A's no-trump bid was killed—in that he held no royal stopper. He should certainly have passed.

Had A been using the high-spade bids he could have bid "five spades"; this would have said to his partner; "I have a no-trumper, except that I do not stop the adversary's suit." And then there would have been woe! For B would have been forced to respond to his partner's "call," he would have had to bid two in something—and this was what he held:

♦ J 6 3
♣ 8 6 5 2
♦ K 9 6 4
♠ 3 2

Here is another hand which caused numerous mistakes; it is a clean score:

♥ J 5 3 2

♣ 5 4

♦ A 9 3 2

♠ A 3 2

♥ Q

♣ K J 10 8 3 2

♦ Q J 8

♠ 10 8 4

	Y	
A		B
	Z	

♥ 10 7 6

♣ 6

♦ K 10 7

♠ K J 9 7 6 5

♥ A K 9 8 4

♣ A Q 9 7

♦ 6 5 4

♠ Q

Z opened with "a heart," which is obviously correct. A bid "two clubs" which, of course, is equally correct.

Y made the mistake of passing; he should have said "two hearts." It is almost (not quite) as bad to pass when you should bid, as to bid when you should pass. Y had a trump trick in his guarded jack; the fact that he held four trumps to an honor in his partner's suit made it very improbable that Z-Y had many hearts. And, in addition to this trick, Y had two "raisers"—his two aces. He could have said "two hearts" and "three hearts" without another bid from Z. It was Y's distinct duty to

announce those raisers; otherwise Z would think that his partner had no help for him and would be debarred from a perfectly sound bid. However, Y passed.

B over-called with "two royals"—most properly. He held the highest of all the suits, and his partner held the lowest. The highest should certainly be the trump, and the lowest the side-suit. Moreover, B held a singleton in his partner's suit; he had everything to make the over-call necessary.

Z was correct in passing after the "two royals." His partner had failed to raise his hearts, and Z's own hand held seven losers—for the queen of clubs would rank as a loser with the clubs bid on her left; one spade, three diamonds, and three clubs made seven losing tricks, even if every one of Z's hearts took. I know players who insist that "a singleton is not a loser"; unless it is a singleton ace it is almost positively a loser. How many singletons (not aces) take tricks? A singleton strengthens one's hand in declared trumps; and after one round the suit is safe. But the singleton must first lose.

Then A did a preposterous thing! He over-called the "two royals" with "three clubs." This was equivalent to saying that he held no

royals at all and that he had wonderful clubs. You can see for yourself whether that was legitimate information. A held three spades to an honor; a singleton heart which promised a beautiful chance for a ruff (and A's trumps were just the kind to use in ruffing) and his clubs were certainly not worth the prominence he gave them.

Y passed. He was evidently a man who had learned to say "no." That, as I said before, is a good principle,—but it can be overdone!

B did not over-call again. Suppose the ace-queen of spades lay with Z! Or suppose they lay with Y, and A had not one spade with which to lead through them.

A had practically denied spades. B's spades were a deadly combination from which to lead away and make three-odd.

Z doubled the "three clubs"; it seems impossible, but it actually happened. In the first place he sat on the wrong side of the club-bid. Then, if Z could n't play hearts, he certainly wanted to play clubs; he expected to take the odd or he would n't have doubled. Why, then, should he give B a chance to go back to royals? By passing Z would have closed the bid at "three clubs," just where he thought he wanted it. But he doubled and kept it open.

A passed; Y passed; and B, of course, said "three royals." Z and A passed, and Y—the man who went to sleep at his post—passed, too. As Y I should certainly have tried "three no-trumps," after my partner's club-double. Of course a double does not always mean trump-strength—but Z's double must have meant clubs; he would n't double on hearts alone; he had n't the ace of either diamonds or spades (because Y had them both); and it was only after a two-bid that he doubled. If the bid had been three or four Z might have been doubling on general strength; but to double a two-bid is apt to mean that you have at least a stopper in the suit you double.

If Y played "three no-trumps" it would be an intensely interesting hand—the discards on the hearts would call for much skill. B would lead a club to his partner's bid. Y could pass it and force A to lead spades up to Dummy's queen (thus getting A's ten and B's king on the same trick) or he could take the first club-round with the ace. I should choose that course, because clubs would still be protected. Then I should lead the king of hearts—a small heart to the jack—and another back into the long heart hand. The discards would seriously cripple A-B.

Y would be set for one trick. He could take

two-odd, but not three. Thus he would lose 50 undoubled, or 100 doubled, and would have 40 aces to offset it. Not a very heavy loss. At royals B went game—although, he should not have done so. Z did not put up his ace of clubs on the first round. B did not finesse his jack on the first round of trumps, but put up his king and caught the lone queen from Z. Thus, his losses were confined to the aces of diamonds and spades, and the king of hearts. A-B made 36 points plus 18 honors, and were “game-in” (and a game is equivalent to 125 honors—because two games are worth 250 honors). By taking the bid Y would have held his two losses down to 60 points at the most—100 minus 40.

Try to think of penalties as well as of points. Try to stop bidding when you have a chance to defeat. As soon as the bid gets to two, in anything, look to see whether you can beat it, before you over-bid it. If the other side bids in the only suit that you can defeat,—*pass!* Don’t double and give them a chance to shift; don’t over-call and give them a chance to beat you. Just pass. If they make a bid that you are sure of defeating, and if the bid is so high, or your hand has such general strength, that you can defeat any other bid they make,—then double. That is your great chance.

There is small satisfaction in doubling a man and seeing him step out onto safe ground. There is great satisfaction in doubling him when he cannot possibly escape.

Please give this doubling system a fair trial, and see if you ever want to go back to your old, haphazard happy-go-lucky doubles. And please try to think of penalties, and see if they do not reward you for your pains!

If the other man wants to beat himself, let him; if he insists upon over-bidding, take the profits he offers you instead of capping his unsound bid with a similar one of your own. If he is sufficiently unfortunate to hold all the poor cards at a time when he is forced to bid, take 100 by letting him play the hand instead of taking 16 or 18 by playing it yourself.

CHAPTER X

ON RULES

IF I should begin this chapter by saying "all rules, save one, were made to break," you would probably be tempted to wonder why, under those circumstances, I have been so insistent regarding them. The facts are these: No one can afford to take the slightest liberty with any rule until he is an expert; when he is an expert he will probably know the rules thoroughly; and when he knows them, he will not want to break them except in one case out of a hundred.

The rules were made to cover ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, and they do. Occasionally the hundredth case arrives, but it takes an expert to recognize it. And any one else who tries it will come to grief and drag his partner with him.

The idea of playing "from your own head" would be all right if you had no partner or if all heads were exactly alike and took precisely the same view of every situation. As neither of

these premises is correct the practice stands condemned.

There is a huge difference between the player who breaks a rule upon rare occasions—but who does so intelligently, opportunely, and with a purpose—and the one who ignorantly breaks a rule every time he plays a card. One is like a person who speaks perfect English but who occasionally descends to slang, or bad English, in order to put a point on a story; and the other is like a person who murders the King's English every time he opens his mouth—and does n't even know he is doing it.

Stick religiously to the rules until you become expert (not in your own eyes, but in the eyes of all who play with you) and then continue to stick to them, unless the situation is very unusual and demands special handling. Then handle it accordingly. There is just one rule that I should never trifle with under any circumstances, and that is "*never bid no-rump unless you stop the adversary's suit.*" The man who breaks that rule walks on very dangerous ground.

Please don't forget all that I have said about the "ninety-nine cases" and remember only the hundredth, and please don't think that the latter has arrived every time you are tempted to

do something unusual. Play the game just as conservatively and just as well as you possibly can; but if an occasion arises where, after having looked carefully at every side of the case, an irregular course seems to be the best,—then take that course. In other words, *break a rule when the issue is more important than the rule!* But don't break any rule lightly, carelessly, ignorantly, or selfishly. They are good old rules—better friends than outsiders even guess—and I hate to see them set aside, if only for a moment.

A wooden player is never a brilliant one; but there are many brilliant players who are thoroughly unsafe. Where their "brilliancy" pays once, it will miscarry three times.

Just notice one thing and see if I am not right. The man who constantly takes unwarranted liberties himself, is the man who demands the most unswerving conservatism from his partners. He is a spoiled child, nothing more. And it takes all the conservatism that those partners can possibly exercise to make a good average with his "brilliancy."

I know, of course, hundreds of players who break rules ignorantly or selfishly. I know numbers of players who never break a rule. Having learned their rules thoroughly, it never

occurs to them that an occasion might arise which would admit of original handling. Such players are wonderful disciples and followers; they could never be leaders. They make absolutely satisfactory partners in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. When that hundredth time comes, you are apt to fume inwardly at their limited vision and their want of spirit. But remember this, perfection is hard to find, in a partner as in anything else; and there is no question which is better,—the partner who *never* breaks a rule, or the partner who *generally* breaks one. Take the former whenever you can get him, and be thankful for your luck!

CHAPTER XI

SYSTEMS

WHEN four players of equal skill are playing together, the victory goes to the two partners who hold the best cards. Skill means the ability to manage given cards to the best possible advantage, to give reliable information by your bids and leads, to locate the cards in the closed hands, to read all signals, to lay traps for the adversary, to avoid all traps he may lay for you, and to judge properly between possible methods of play. But presupposing equal skill—the cards decide the victory; not "bluff," not signals, not conventions nor "calls"—just cards. If private conventions were honorable they would naturally advantage their users; when understood equally by all four players they spread their advantages equally. It is impossible to "push your luck" by the multiplication of conventions. After you have brought your game to the highest point of skill of which you are capable, the cards are the arbiters of your

fate. If any one doubts the ability of cards to bring victory, let him look for a moment on the wretched players who bring home prizes from card-parties.

Study your game; practice your game; play your game. Then study, practice, and play again, *ad infinitum*, and you will have done all in your power. After that, luck decides it. No "systems" based on mathematical chances of possibility, no permutation of combinations, no complicated conventions, will aid you in the least. The simpler you keep the game the better for it and for you.

Take this assurance from me—no artificial aids in the shape of "conventions" will solve your difficulties; they will but add to your burdens if you are inexpert; and, if you are expert, I cannot see why you need them. They may suit your taste and you may like them, but you cannot possibly *need* them, in the sense that they are indispensable to a high-grade game. And my idea of the perfect game is the one that is shorn of all superfluities, and that retains the fewest set conventions as are compatible with perfect mutual understanding.

I have just been listening to some arguments in favor of a new system of bidding; this system is said to be based on mathematical possibilities;

according to it you may break all known laws—you may bid on jack-suits and ten-suits, “because there is an even chance of luck being with you or against you.”

I do not predict much vogue for a system based on such ideas; its flaws are apparent at a glance. The present laws are made to protect players in nine cases out of ten—not in five out of ten. They would not be worth much if they afforded no better protection than that! What would you think of a lawyer, or a physician, who lost 50 per cent. of his cases? What college would pass a student whose examination averages were no higher than 50 per cent.?

Moreover, a thing which works beautifully in theory may fail utterly in practice. It may fail repeatedly. It is possible to work out a most exact theory of mathematical chances and to lose every dollar you own when you put it to the test. If this were not true, there would be fewer suicides at Monte Carlo.

The school of bidding for which I stand is eminently conservative; it depends less upon luck than any other system I have ever heard exploited. Plunging is eliminated, *strict attention is paid to losses as well as to winnings*, no bid is ever one point in excess of absolute necessity, and no heavy obligations are imposed on the

partner of the bidder. When your cards are good you can win as much by this game as by any other; when they are bad, no system that I have ever known will limit your losses as successfully. And that last point is absolutely essential —to keep your losses down when luck is against you. Any one can win when he has all the material. I have always been a proverbially “poor holder.” I am confident that I owe my card-success to this fact; I am a better player and teacher than I could possibly have been otherwise. Not having grown used to luck, I don’t expect it and don’t depend on it. I have learned to do without it and to discount it. I accept and foster no theories that depend upon luck (one’s own luck, or one’s partner’s)—to put them through. I see immediately the flaws in such systems when they are offered to me. They may be very brilliant when the necessary luck attends them, but nothing can blind my eyes to the certain fiascos that await them when luck fails. *And it is bound to fail often!* If you do not depend on luck, you are not turned topsy-turvy by its non-appearance.

When luck is good, the success of the Conservative is as brilliant as any other; when luck is poor, it is infinitely more so!

CHAPTER XII

THIRTY-SIX TEST-HANDS

FOR something over two years, I have been the Auction-expert of *The New York Times*. The paper has an enormous circulation and my articles have therefore been read in most parts of the English-speaking world. Readers have sent me interesting hands that they have held, and these hands have been discussed in the columns of *The Times*, by other readers and by me.

I have selected certain of these hands that excited the greatest interest amongst my readers. Every hand given here is an *actual* hand, and has been legitimately dealt in a real game.

Test-Hand No. I

I received this entralling hand from a correspondent in Northampton, with a request that I should dissect it. Every one to whom I showed the hand, found it interesting beyond words; unfortunately, the score is not given.

♥	A K J 10 7 2	
♣	9 6	
♦	—	
♠	Q 10 9 8 3	
♥	—	Y
♣	K 8 5 4 3 2	A
♦	A 9 8 7 5 4	B
♠	6	Z
♥	Q 8	
♣	A Q 10	
♦	K Q J 10 6 2	
♠	K 4	
♥	9 6 5 4 3	
♣	J 7	
♦	3	
♠	A J 7 5 2	

It was before the advent of "nulos," and the original bidding ran thus:

Z, "one royal."

A, "two diamonds."

Y, "two royals."

B, "three diamonds."

Z, "three royals."

A, "four diamonds."

Y, "four royals."

B, "four no-trumps."

Z, "double."

Result—six-odd, for B, in doubled "no-trumps."

And the question I was specially asked to

decide was whether Y was correct in his first-round raise to "two-royals," or whether he should have said "two hearts."

Z would have a beautiful "nullo"-bid; in fact any one of the four players, except B, would be perfectly able to play "nullos." Y would be foolish to do it, holding sixty-four heart-honors; and his spades look a bit menacing. However, by throwing his ace and queen on the same trick (and allowing B to throw his king, even), Z could play the deuce and the trey on the second-round, and force B to take with the four. And then no one could lead them to him again.

Failing "nullos," I think Z's opening-bid was certainly correct. He has a seven-point royal-suit, running to the ace-jack, and a side-singleton that makes his little trump look promising for a ruff. There are those who demand *ace-king* for an original make; but not many players will agree with that. Such a system would either force one back to unnecessary spade-declarations, or would have its inevitable attendant in the shape of a complicated table of "calls," provided for hands that did not hold a "make." We will certainly allow Z to open with "a royal."

A's bid of "two diamonds," was also correct. He has a blank suit, a singleton, and six trumps to the ace (yet he, too, lacks *ace-king*; just see

where you would land, if you always waited for that).

Y's raise to "two royals" could not be criticized; he has five trumps to two honors, a splendid side-suit, and is blank in the adversary's suit. Nevertheless, I should rather hear him say "two hearts," on account of those sixty-four honors. You remember I have always urged you to raise your partner's suit, rather than to show your own, "unless your suit is better than his and will enable you to go game in fewer tricks—or unless you have wonderful honors in one of the high suits." Y has just that—"wonderful honors in one of the high suits." Those sixty-four points are something that no one can steal from him, if hearts are trumps.

Y's own hand precludes the possibility of Z holding more than eighteen royal-honors; however, Z and Y together might easily hold forty-five honors, and Y's raising-hand in royals is wonderful. I prefer the bid of "two hearts," but I insist that the "two royals" is above fair criticism.

B's "no-trump"-bid is very poor. He has a mere stopper in spades, and it lies on the wrong side of the original royal-bid; he knows nothing of hearts, except that he himself is deplorably weak

in them, and his clubs promise but two tricks at the outside.

Had Y bid hearts, B would never have declared "no-trumps"; even failing the heart-bid, B's "no-trump"-bid is extremely poor.

But poor as it is, Z's double is infinitely worse. On what could Z double? He holds a very much broken five-card spade-suit, poor hearts, poor clubs, and a singleton in the suit in which both adversaries have shown strength. I cannot conceive of such a double.

There are those, I know, who double every high bid "on general principles." Such doubles are inexcusable. Plenty of three-bids and four-bids—yes, and even five-bids—go through beautifully. And "a poor double is worse than a poor bid."

Granting that B has his "four no-trumps" and that Z has doubled, it depends entirely upon Z's lead whether A-B make a small slam, or whether Z-Y take eleven tricks and defeat the bid to the tune of 800 points.

Z should never lead his suit (spades) up to a declared stopper; that would be to allow B to come in on the first round, or the second, and to make every one of his long suit on which he has been bidding. He would make a small slam; coming in on the first, or the second round of

spades, he would lead a small diamond to Dummy's ace, and another into his own hand. After making all his diamonds, he would lead his ace and queen of clubs,—then his ten, which he would over-take with Dummy's king, and make all of Dummy's clubs. There would never be a heart-lead.

Again, it is equally obvious that Z should never lead a diamond. His object should be to put his partner in, so that Y may lead spades through the declared stopper. The natural inference would be that Y might be strong where his partner is weak. Z is horribly weak in both clubs and hearts, and knows absolutely nothing of either suit.

I cannot see that there is a shade of difference in favor of either the heart-lead, or the club-lead, as far as Z is concerned. After seeing a hand open it is easy to "play results," and to squeeze up reasons for doing the thing that is obviously the one that brings in the winnings. But holding Z's hand, *knowing nothing of the other hands*, and presupposing the bidding to have been what it was, I cannot see anything to determine Z's choice of lead—between the club and the heart.

If he chooses the heart, he is gloriously victorious; if he chooses the club, he is ruinously

defeated. And neither one is "right" nor "wrong," as far as his hand is concerned. His choice is purely and simply luck.

The hand is interesting to the last degree.

Test-Hand No. 2

This hand was sent me from Nassau, Bahamas, where it was played by four expert players. The score was game-all.

♥ 6 4	
♣ A Q J 10 9 7	
♦ A K Q J 9	
♠ —	
♥ J 9 7 3	Y
♣ K 3 2	A
♦ 5 3	B
♠ A K Q J	Z
♥ —	
♣ 6 4	
♦ 8 7 6 2	
♠ 9 8 7 5 4 3 2	
♥ A K Q 10 8 5 2	
♣ 8 5	
♦ 10 4	
♠ 10 6	

Actual bidding ran thus:

Z, "two hearts." (I don't like the preëmptive bid, on general principles. This time, of course,

it does no harm. And yet Z holds six sure losers and might later be very glad of some of the very suit-information that he is doing his best to kill.)

A, "two royals." (Two is a high bid on a four-card suit, but the 72 honors excuse it. You see the preëmptive bid *did not* preëmpt.)

Y, "three clubs."

B, "three royals" (on his blank suit and seven trumps).

Z "four hearts."

A, "double." (I don't like that. His jack of trumps is his only sure trick. I don't see where he expected to get his three others. The king of clubs is on the wrong side of the bid, and there is very small hope of his making a *third* round of spades, with hearts as trumps. It is always necessary to remember that one adversary or the other may do some ruffing.)

Z, "five diamonds."

B, "by."

Z, "five hearts."

A, "double." (If I were playing against a good player and doubled his four-bid, and if, on top of that double, he made a five-bid in the same suit, —I should certainly let him alone. I should feel sure he knew what he was about.)

Y and B, "by."

Z, "redouble." Closed.

The result was that Z made his contract. I do not see how he could possibly fail to make a small slam. The first lead would have been a spade, I should think; Z would ruff in Dummy, lead the nine of diamonds, overtake with his own ten, and lead another spade which Dummy would ruff. A could take one trump-trick and nothing else. B could take nothing.

However, Z made five tricks worth 32 apiece; 100 for contract; 64 honors less chicane; and rubber, a total of 558 on the hand. If Z had made his small slam, it would have counted, in addition: one trick at 32 points, 20 for slam, and 100 for extra trick, a total of 710 points on the hand.

I do not think any of the original bidding is open to real criticism. The hands were closed, and that makes a great difference; and I think that most players—even most very excellent players—would have bid and doubled as those four players did. But, as I have said, I am extremely conservative. And I merely want to show you that by following the maxims I have constantly laid down, A could certainly have prevented his opponents from achieving such a remarkable victory.

Look at the nullo-possibilities in that hand

for A-B! If A kept throwing the lead to Y, the latter could never lead a spade.

Test-Hand No. 3

(From New York City)

The score on this was 21-0, in favor of A-B. *It was therefore advisable that A-B should be conservative.*

♥ 7 4		
♣ 9 7 5		
♦ Q 7 6 3 2		
♠ 8 5 4		
♥ Q 10 6 3	Y	♥ 9 8 5 2
♣ 6 3	A	♣ K 10 8 2
♦ A K 5 4		♦ 8
♠ K 6 2	B	♠ J 9 7 3
	Z	
♥ A K J		
♣ A Q J 4		
♦ J 10 9		
♠ A Q 10		

Original bids ran as follows:

Z, "one no-trump."

A, "by."

Y, "two diamonds." (Correct; an over-call of

danger, on five cards to an honor, and an otherwise blank hand.)

B, "by."

Z, "two no-trumps."

A, "double." (That is the first mistake; it was done for the purpose of frightening Y back to diamonds, and Y refused to go. Bluffs will not often work with the best players.)

Y and B, "by."

Z, "redouble." (You see the result of the bluff double. Z was not afraid of any jump that A might make. Nevertheless, as Z, I should have passed and closed the bidding. Two no-trumps doubled and scored would have been rubber; and Z was practically sure of making it. By allowing A to bid again, Z might be able to defeat him, *but he positively could not take rubber on A's bid.* He should have closed the bidding where it meant a sure rubber for him.)

A, "three hearts." (That is an awful bid; yet it is A's one chance of saving rubber. It is a bid he would never have made unless he had been frightened into it. He had no reason to expect *four* trumps in his partner's hand. Still, A's bluff double had imperiled the rubber, and he had to do what he could.)

Y and B, "by."

Z, "double." Closed.

On the play, A lost 200 points. That was bad, but it was better than losing rubber. Had Z closed the bidding on the "two no-trumps" doubled (instead of redoubling), he would have scored 250 for rubber, 30 for aces, and either 40 or 60 for tricks (according to play). And he would have *closed the rubber*. By redoubling, he gave A the bid, kept the rubber open, and allowed A-B another chance to recoup their losses.

If A had passed the "two no-trumps" there is scarcely a chance that Z would have taken game, because he would have been constantly inconvenienced by leading away from his strong hand. If the first lead were a low diamond, it is highly improbable that (on a closed hand) Z would put up Dummy's queen. If he *did* so play, he could take game, because he could finesse the clubs properly—from the weak hand to the strong. But Z would have no reason to think that the queen would take the trick. He could not possibly tell that *both* the ace and the king lay with A. The rule of eleven would show him that B held *one* diamond higher than the four-spot; it might easily be the ace, or the king.

If nulos were used, B could easily extricate his partner from the "three hearts," doubled. He could bid "four nulos" and make them; he could make more! Z could never allow nulos

to be played—his high cards would mean a sure rubber for A-B; he would have to go up in no-trumps, and be set.

Test-Hand No. 4

This hand came from the Military Club, London; it is the rubber-game, and the score is 8-6 in favor of A-B.

♥ 9 8 6 4		
♣ 10 5 4 3		
♦ 7		
♠ 9 8 5 3		
♥ 5 3 2	Y	♥ A
♣ A	A	♣ J 8 7 6
♦ K Q 10 8 5 2	B	♦ 9 6 4 3
♠ A 4 2	Z	♠ Q J 10 6
♥ K Q J 10 7		
♣ K Q 9 2		
♦ A J		
♠ K 7		

Actual bidding ran: Z, "a heart"; A, "two diamonds"; Y, "two hearts"; B, "three diamonds"; Z, "three hearts"; A, "four diamonds"; Z, "double"; A, "redouble," and took rubber.

Y's raise was certainly light; still, he holds a

side-singleton and four small trumps. To save rubber I should have made the raise; otherwise, I should let Z do his own raising. And, as Z, I should never have doubled four diamonds. Nor, as Y, would I have redoubled, for fear Z would have returned to hearts; without the redouble it meant rubber anyhow, and that was enough.

Test-Hand No. 5

This came from Brookline, and caused great interest.

A-B are one game in, and it is the first hand on the second game.

♥ —		
♣ A K J 9 6 2		
♦ A K 10 9 8		
♠ A K		
♥ 9 8 6 5 4 3 2	Y	♥ A K Q J 10 7
♣ 7 5	A	♣ Q 10 8
♦ 5 4		♦ Q J
♠ 5 2	B	♠ Q J
♥ —	Z	
♣ 4 3		
♦ 7 6 3 2		
♠ 10 9 8 7 6 4 3		

The original bidding was:

Z, "a spade" (Z would have had a wonderful nullo-bid,—but his partner would never have permitted him to play it); A, "no"; Y, "a no-trump"; B, "two hearts"; Z, "two royals"; A, "three hearts"; Y, "three royals"; B, "four hearts"; Y, "double"; Z, "four royals"; closed.

Z-Y made grand slam in royals, and would have scored 252 net in honor column at 4 hearts doubled.

I do not like that first "no-trump" from Y—with a blank suit. He has his choice between clubs and diamonds; I should choose the former, because it is longer; the extra trump will be useful in ruffing hearts, and it takes five-odd in either for game.

B should bid "one heart," and Z "one royal," on seven trumps and a blank suit. A royal-call of "four spades" would not have helped Z in the least; if Y has no legitimate bid with which to keep the bidding open—a ten-high suit is no advantage; and if Y does keep the bidding open, Z can bid his own royals on the second round. The "call" is useless.

A should never raise hearts—you "must not raise on trumps alone"—you must have side-suits, singletons, or blank suits. A has none. What good is it to hold all thirteen trumps if the

other side hold all three plain suits, and if you cannot ruff those suits? You simply "can't get in."

B should not bid his hearts higher than two, failing a raise from A. Even his 80 honors should not tempt him. He has six losing cards; if he gets doubled and loses a couple of hundreds, of what use will his 80 be?

It is not much good to hold all thirteen trumps (divided between the two hands), if all the suit-cards are held against you, and if you have no singletons or blank suits. The adversaries, not you, will lead. They will lead side-suit,—not trumps. And you will lose all your side-tricks before you ever get in.

Test-Hand No. 6

The score on this hand was 18-0 on the rubber-game, in favor of A-B.

♥ K 2		
♣ 6 4 3		
♦ Q 7 2		
♠ A 9 5 4 2		
♥ 10 7 5	Y	♥ Q J 9
♣ A J 10 9 5	A	♣ K
♦ A 8 5 3	B	♦ J 10 9
♠ 10	Z	♠ K Q J 8 7 6
♥ A 8 6 4 3		
♣ Q 8 7 2		
♦ K 6 4		
♠ 3		

The original bidding does not meet with my unqualified approval, but this is how it ran:

Z, "nullo."

A, "two clubs."

Y, "two nulos."

B, "two royals."

Z, "three nulos."

A and Y, "no."

B, "three royals."

Z, "no." (I should have said four nulos, to the score.)

A, "no."

Y, "double." (I don't like his position.)

B, "redouble." (A mistake; if he expected to make it, he should have passed and taken rubber—instead of giving the adversaries another chance.)

Z, "four nulos." Closed.

A's choice of lead is interesting. The original A led his five of diamonds; that is not wrong, but he has better leads in his hand. I should have led the ten of spades. The bidding had shown that his partner had high spades which were bound to take. By leading the ten, A could get later discards; he could discard the ace of diamonds, and some clubs,—or even the eight of diamonds.

This hand shows the weakness of leading *high* cards; suppose A leads his diamond ace, "because it has to take sometime, and may as well do it first as last." Immediately, Z will throw his king from one hand, and his queen from the other.

If A leads the ten of spades, Z will suspect it is a singleton. B's high bidding in spades, Dummy's long spades, and A's choice of lead will mark its object. Z can take with Dummy's

ace,—to prevent A's discards; or he can play the nine, in order to get the suit led again, *and to get discards in his own hand.* That would be my course; and Z's first discard should be the club queen; it is far more dangerous than the king of diamonds (because the king and queen can fall together), or than the ace of hearts (because the king would take a heart round, even if the ace were thrown).

B will over-take his partner's ten of spades, with the king, and will lead the queen. Z will throw the queen of clubs and A the ace of diamonds. Dummy should take with the spade ace; then he should lead the king of hearts,—over-taking with the ace; and then the king of diamonds, throwing the queen. He doesn't take another trick, and he goes rubber.

It is interesting to note that if the five and deuce of clubs were reversed,—or the five and trey,—the bid would be set. A could take the first club-round—playing his ace on his partner's king,—and he could then lead his deuce and force a club-round on Z. It is as useful to hold the deuce of the adversary's suit, when playing nulos, as to hold the ace of his suit, when playing no-trumps.

It has frequently been proposed *that the original nullo-bidder should be the Dummy,* in-

stead of the player. This would reverse the general order of things, would still further carry out the negation of nulos, would expose the real nullo-hand on the table, would prevent the exposure of dangerous strength in the assisting-hand, and would permit nulos to be bid much more frequently. But I think its disadvantages are very great; when I bid nulos, I want to be able to play them; I have a scheme in my head that might not occur to my partner. Moreover, I do not think the general order of things should be so radically upset, nor do I think that we want nulos too constantly. We want to have them, ready and waiting, when the right combination of cards and circumstances arises, but not to force them unduly.

By remembering the folly of bidding "a nullo" over a partner's "spade," and by paying strict attention to over-calls, and non-raises, the danger of strong exposed Dummy-hands can generally be avoided.

Test-Hand No. 7

This is one of the most remarkable hands I have ever seen. It was sent me from New York City. It was the first hand of the rubber-game, and the cards lay thus:

♥	10 7 4		♥	K Q J 9 8 6 5 3 2
♣	—		♣	—
♦	—		♦	A J 2
♠	A K Q J 10 9 8 7 5 3		♠	6
♥	—	Y	♥	
♣	J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4	A	♣	
♦	3 2	B	♦	
♠	5	Z	♠	
♥	A		♥	
♣	A K Q		♣	
♦	K Q 10 9 8 7 6 4 3		♦	
♠	—		♠	

Z opened the bidding with "a diamond," which was obviously correct.

A made the mistake of bidding "two clubs," which would have been proper on the second round, but not on the first. Jack-bids are barred on the first round. I do not say that A could not make two-odd in clubs, under most circumstances, but I *do* say that he misinformed his partner. His bid (being made on the first round) announced that he held "a playable suit, headed by the ace, the king, or (possibly) the queen." His partner, relying on this information, might be led far astray in future doubles and bids. A was not forced to bid, and should certainly have passed.

Y, naturally, bid "two royals," and the bid came round to B, who bid "three hearts," because he trusted his partner for the high clubs. He thought he could get a spade discard on one of his partner's clubs—and possibly even a diamond discard on another. This illustrates the exact point that I have been making in regard to jack-bids. B might have gone much higher in his hearts.

Z, of course, made the sure bid of "four diamonds." Z held a hand on which any one would be justified in bidding diamonds up to five-odd.

A passed and Y bid "four royals"; naturally he did not want to lose those ninety honors.

Then B did some very clever reasoning. He saw that his two adversaries, Z and Y, each had a good hand of his own, but that neither one held any help for the other. He saw, too, that each mistrusted the other and wanted to play his own hand. Now B would rather play against diamonds than royals. He, therefore, doubled the royals in order to frighten Z back to his diamonds.

This "bluff" double worked beautifully, for Z promptly bid his "six diamonds." Nevertheless, in spite of its cleverness and in spite, too, of its success in this present case, it is a plan that I do not recommend.

Had Z played correctly he would have argued

thus: No one doubles any bid unless he doubles every bid. Thus, if B doubled "four royals," he stood ready to double "six diamonds." Z's bid would, therefore, add two tricks to the contract without getting away from the double. In other words, he would have to play a six-bid doubled instead of a four-bid doubled.

Again, although Z did not hold a single spade, he still held wonderful help for a royal-bid. His ace of hearts, his three master clubs, and at least one of his diamonds should all be counted "good" cards. And the mere fact that he was chicane was worth 18 points.

There are no "rescue"-bids; you cannot possibly pull your partner out of a double in these days. Z made the mistake of his life when he bid his "six diamonds." Had he passed and had Y passed (refraining from redoubling because of his delight in the double and his fear of frightening B back to hearts) then B's bluff would have been called, and he would have been in a decided trap.

Nevertheless, although it is easy to criticize Z's bid and to see the flaws in it, I do not believe there is one player in a thousand who would not have made it, nor one situation in a thousand where it would have worked so badly.

Had I been Y, I should have over-called with

"five royals," even though I had been doubled at four and was sure of being doubled at five. The royal-bid could be made with a decrease of contract, and the 90 honors would go far toward discounting any possible loss. A hand like Y's should be played at royals, at almost any cost. His three heart-tricks are his maximum loss, and his 90 honors are sure.

You see, while Z lacked his partner's suit, he still had an excellent general hand for assistance; but Y lacked his partner's suit, and had no general assisting hand. Also, Y's suit was higher, and any honors he held would, of necessity, be more valuable. Decidedly, Z was the one to efface himself and to supply the side-suits, while his partner furnished the trumps.

However, after Z's bid of "six diamonds," A and Y passed, B doubled, and the hand was played at six diamonds, doubled. Y subsided and made no further efforts to play his royals; this was a pity, but perhaps he felt discouraged at being constantly over-called.

Fortunately for B, his partner (A) led the jack of clubs. I should think he would have been more apt to lead a spade, "through" the hand that was doubled and "into" the hand that had doubled the royals. This was a risk that B took when he made his bluff double; he fooled

his partner as well as his adversary, and invited a lead that would have been thoroughly weak. Had A led the spade, Z would have taken in Dummy and discarded from his own hand. He would then have led another high spade, and put B in a very unpleasant position. If B discarded, Z also discarded, and led a little spade—ruffing in his own hand, in order to pull trumps from his weaker adversary (A) and to the tune of two trumps from the enemy to one of his own. If B ruffed low, on the second spade-round, Z over-ruffed and led trumps, making a small slam. B's one course would have been to ruff with the ace, and lead a heart up to weakness. A would have ruffed Z's ace of hearts (making their book) and returned a club, which B would have ruffed and made his odd. B would have scored 100 points, less Z's simple honors (14) and Y's chicane (14), or a total of 72 points, *provided* Z did not discard the ace of hearts. When B trumped with the ace of diamonds, Z should *discard the ace of hearts*; then, when B led hearts, Z should trump with *one of his sequence* (the six-spot). By leading trumps, he would then make his contract of six diamonds doubled; 84 points, 50 for contract, 20 for slam, and 28 for honors.

But A's club-lead was fortunate. B ruffed and led king of hearts, which A ruffed. That made

the book; then A led a club which B ruffed with the jack of diamonds, and of course he took a trick with the ace of trumps—a total of two-odd for A-B.

Had Y bid “five royals” he would have been defeated, but his ninety honors would have gone far toward offsetting his slight loss.

It is easy to criticize and to play results, but I think very few players would have refrained from Z’s six-diamond bid. A’s first-round bid was a distinct mistake, because his suit was jack-high; personally, I consider Y’s passing (on the last round) another mistake, because he threw away 90 points. B’s bluff-double was a wonderfully clever bit of strategy, but one which I should hesitate to recommend.

It has been suggested that Y’s first-round bid should have been “four-royals,” to show his partner that the hand *must* be played at that suit. It would have been a correct bid, and an absolutely safe one. But I don’t see how it would have changed matters. *If* B was going to make his bluff-double, he would have made it just the same; *if* Z was going to get frightened by his lack of spades, and impressed with his diamond-suit,—he would have jumped to diamonds just the same. The result would not have been changed, in the slightest degree.

A-B would have had the chance of their lives at "nullos,"—but "nullos" had not yet appeared.

The four men who played this hand were brilliant and practiced players,—not averse to a sporting chance, as the bidding testifies.

Test-Hand No. 8

This is one of the subtlest hands I have ever seen,—in the play as well as in the bid. The play of every card is of the most vital importance, and the discards call for the utmost care.

♥	8 2
♣	3 2
♦	8 4 3
♠	J 8 7 4 3 2

♥	—
♣	K Q 7 6 5 4
♦	A Q J 7 5
♠	K Q

Y	
A	B
Z	

♥	A Q J 9 6 3
♣	J
♦	6
♠	A 10 9 6 5

♥	K 10 7 5 4
♣	A 10 9 8
♦	K 10 9 2
♠	—

Z should certainly open with "a heart" (five

to two honors, an ace-suit, a king-suit, and a blank-suit).

A should cover with "two clubs," because his clubs will make a better suit with which to ruff hearts, and his diamonds will be a strong side-suit.

Y should pass, without a moment's hesitation. In the original hand, Y bid "two royals," as a warning to his partner that he could not help in hearts. That would possibly have been permissible had A not bid; but the moment A bids, Y is relieved of the necessity of any warning-bid. You warn your partner, if he still holds the bid, when it comes around to you; if the bid has been taken from him, your responsibility is over. Y should pass.

The score of this game is important; and I think B's bid depends entirely upon it. If A-B had ten points or so, on the game, I should not have B over-call his partner, even though he holds a singleton club. That singleton is an honor and he holds two ace-suits as side strength for his partner—a beautiful supporting hand. Many excellent players will not over-call their partner, holding two aces, even when they are chicane in the partner's suit; they claim that those aces are all that can reasonably be demanded of them.

If A-B had something on the game, B should pass. But as it is a clean score, it would be allowable for B to over-call with "two hearts," in order to play the hand at a major-suit with "two hearts." It is true that hearts have already been bid against him, and that on his most vulnerable side. Nevertheless, his own hearts are in very close sequence, and he holds simple honors and an excellent side-hand. His drop from the jack of hearts to the nine, leaves but one card between; his singleton in his partner's suit and his other singleton and ace of spades, give him a strong heart make. It is hard to go game in clubs, and it looks as though B might manage that feat in hearts. As a matter of fact, he just misses it. Twenty-four is his maximum score against the best defense.

I cannot see how any player at that table could consider a no-trump bid—Z and A have a blank-suit each, Y has almost a Yarborough, and B has two singletons. No-trumps would be bad bidding from any of them, whether or not they could score on it. Yet I received proposed no-trump bids from every hand at that table except Y. I also had proposed royal-bids from A-B and proposed royal-bids from Z-Y. A bid of "two-royals" from B on the first round could not be censured, though I greatly prefer the hearts.

Played at clubs, I had letters that give A-B a small slam, five-odd, and four-odd "against the best defense." Every one made the correct lead from Y—the eight of hearts.

As a matter of fact, A can take five-odd in clubs, against the best defense. Therefore, the heart over-call from B, would be a mistake.

It is obvious that if A can make 24 points at clubs, B's heart over-call is unnecessary; B cannot make more than 24 himself. But if A can be held down to 12 or 18, then B improves the situation with his heart-bid.

If A is playing clubs and Y leads the eight of hearts, A should put up Dummy's jack, draw Z's king, and then trump in his own hand. This will give the command of hearts to him instead of to Z and will prevent Z from forcing him to trump the suit. It will also put Z in a decided box whenever he has to lead. This process is known as "ruffing out" a suit and is one of the subtlest points the game holds.

Then A should lead a small club to Dummy's jack. Z would hardly let that singleton take a trick. He would put up his ace, and then what could he lead? He has no spades, and it would be suicidal to lead hearts up to that strength. He leads a small diamond.

A takes with the jack, and leads three rounds

of trumps; on these, he discards two small hearts, and a small spade from Dummy (he knows that the ten of hearts lies with Z, by the bid, and by Y's lead).

The third round of trumps throws Z in the lead. There is nothing for it but to lead a diamond. A takes with the queen, and leads two rounds of spades, *over-taking the last round with Dummy's ace*. If Z discards a diamond, he unguards his king and A takes all the rest of the tricks. If Z discards a heart, he unguards his ten, and the result is the same. Two trump-tricks are the most that Z-Y can possibly make.

I had letters,—scores of them,—assuring me that A-B could not *possibly* make more than four-odd in clubs; and others that insisted they could take but two or three-odd. I think the play of the ace of hearts was the crux.

I will give you a few samples of the solutions I received, just to show you what different persons do with the same cards.

First, B played the hand at "two royals," taking four or five-odd; the extra trick depended on Z's lead of a diamond or a club.

Second, the bidding closed at A's "two clubs" and he made four-odd.

Third, Z opened with "a no-trump" (lacking spades), A said "two clubs," B "two hearts,"

and A "two no-trumps," which he made. A would not be warranted in making this bid with his blank-suit. He needs his partner's hearts, and how can he hope to get them? If he makes the bid, it is a warning of heart weakness; B should over-call with "three hearts," because of his two singletons.

Fourth, Z opened with "two spades" and A answered with "five spades." Thoroughly incorrect, even granting the use of high spades.

Some solutions had A play "no-trumps," and others had B play it. Some contained doubles, and others did not. Some gave the hand to B, in hearts, and others to Z,—with the same trump. Many had B play royals; and of the ones that gave A the play, at clubs, scarcely two results were the same.

I have rarely seen a more interesting hand.

Test-Hand No. 9

This is a hand I played myself, with three men who came from widely separated parts of the world. They were all justly noted players. It was the first hand of the rubber, and I was playing "Z."

♥ A K 7 2		
♣ —		
♦ K Q J 9		
♠ A 7 4 3 2		
♥ Q J 9 8	Y	
♣ 7	A	B
♦ 10 7		
♠ K Q J 8 6 5	Z	
♥ 6 5		
♣ A K Q J 10 8 6		
♦ 5 4 2		
♠ 9		

Not being a preëmptive bidder, I opened with "one club." My hand held six losers; why should even five honors persuade me to insist on clubs, if my partner had something better?

A said "a royal," and Y said "a no-trump," and that I do not like. He needed my clubs, and how could he get to them, unless I had side re-entry? And what re-entry could he expect me to have? He and A had all the high spades, he had two high hearts and three high diamonds. There was only the slim chance of my holding the ace of diamonds, or the queen of hearts.

I should not have cared to have Y say "two clubs" when he was chicane. He had wonderful

side-help; but I might have made a light bid on a hand like this:

♣ A J 5 3 2

Then there would have been eight trumps held against us and no way for me to lead trumps "from the weak hand to the strong," or to ruff in the weak hand. Or suppose I had said "one club," on this:

♣ A K Q J

Then there would have been *nine* trumps held against us.

I think Y should have passed; his hand and my club-bid made it certain that A could not do much damage in royals. If, on a later round, I said "two clubs," myself,—then I showed a really good suit. After that, Y might safely raise me several times, on his side-hand.

However, Y said "a no-trump," B passed, and I over-called with "two clubs." That, I think, should have been warning enough.

A said "two royals"; I think Y should certainly have doubled; his hand and mine could now positively defeat *any* bid. But he did n't double; he said "two no-trumps."

B passed, and again I over-called with "four clubs";—I was sure now that my partner's

hand would take care of some of my "losers." And this time, every one let me have it. Of course, I took everything but the ace of diamonds. The score was: 36 for tricks (and game-in), 20 for slam, 12 for chicane, and 60 for honors; a total of 128.

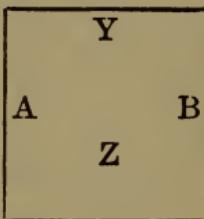
If Y *had* doubled the two royals, I think I should certainly have overcalled with "three clubs." It is against my innermost principles to interfere with my partner's double, or to change it to a bid. And I never want any one to interfere with my doubles. All my doubles are "business-doubles"; I never make one that gives the adversaries a chance to jump; and I *never lose one!* Nor will any one who adheres to the doubling laws that I teach.

Nevertheless, I think the over-call, in this case, would be warranted. It meant a sure game,—and a game is intrinsically worth 125 honor-points, because two games are worth 250 such points. Then my 60 honors were not entirely negligible. The 128 points that the hand scored, plus the 125 that "game-in" represented,—were better than my partner's double could have been.

Test-Hand No. 10

♠ 5 4 3
 ♣ A K 7 6 5 4 3
 ♦ 5 2
 ♠ 4 *

♠ Q J 10
 ♣ Q 8
 ♦ K J 10 9
 ♠ J 10 7 6



♠ K 9
 ♣ J 10 9
 ♦ A Q 6
 ♠ A K Q 9 8

♠ A 8 7 6 2
 ♣ 2
 ♦ 8 7 4 3
 ♠ 5 3 2

This is a hand where Z-Y bid nullos to a grand slam, in the effort to make rubber. And they won their bid. The bidding opened with "a nullo," from Z. A said "a no-trump," and Y said "two clubs." He had seven losing cards and a nullo-partner; upon striking no response he switched to nullos and bid them up to seven. If A-B had bid "seven royals," or "six no-trumps" they would have been defeated. Z-Y had all the low cards in the pack; they held all the deuces, all the treys, all the fours, all the fives, and three of the four sixes. Yet, thanks to nullos, they had their chance.

Test-Hand No. 11

♠ J 4 3 2
 ♣ A 6 4 3
 ♦ —
 ♡ A 10 6 5 3

♠ Q 10
 ♣ K Q 10 8
 ♦ Q J 10
 ♡ K J 9 8

	Y	
A		B
	Z	

♠ A K 9 8 7 6 5
 ♣ J
 ♦ K 4 3
 ♡ 7 4

♠ —
 ♣ 9 7 5 2
 ♦ A 9 8 7 6 5 2
 ♡ Q 2

This was a long-contested rubber-game; the score was 28-14, in favor of A-B. Z opened with "a diamond," A said "a no-trump," Y said "two nulos," and B "two hearts." Then Z dropped his diamonds and switched to nulos; he realized that his hand would be on the board, and that its only weak points were the queen of spades and nine of clubs. He bid nulos to five against A-B's hearts. Thanks to a faulty lead, Y made a slam. B led one of his sequence of hearts thinking that he might catch Y with the lone queen or ten, and that A might get a val-

able discard on the second or third round. Instead, Z got an immediate discard of the spade queen.

Had B gone to "five hearts," he would have been set. Z would have led the diamond-ace; seeing Y's discard he would have led another diamond, Y would have trumped and led his two aces,—four tricks in all. In no-trumps A-B could also have been set.

Test-Hand No. 12

It is the rubber-game, and the score is 16-0 in favor of A-B, who are, beside, far ahead in penalties.

♥ K Q 3 2		
♣ A		
♦ A K		
♠ A 8 6 5 4 3		
♥ 9 6	Y	♥ J 10 7
♣ Q 6 4 3	A	♣ K
♦ Q 6 5 3	B	♦ J 10 9 8 7 4 2
♠ Q 10 2	Z	♠ 9 7
♥ A 8 5 4		
♣ J 10 9 8 7 5 2		
♦ —		
♠ K J		

I will first quote the actual bidding on the hand, which is diametrically opposed to the bidding I should have done.

Z, "a club." (Wrong on the jack-suit. There is not an expert that I know of who does not decry opening jack-bids; they demand ace or king. It is a common thing to hear them say, when describing the game of some player; "Oh, he is the kind of a fellow who will bid on a long jack-suit." That bid always stamps a game at once as unsound.)

A, "by"; Y "by" (that is a very remarkable move when Z-Y are so in need of points); B, "a diamond"; Z and A, "by"; Y, "two clubs"; B and Z, "by"; A, "two diamonds"; Y, "two no-trumps"; B, "three diamonds"; Z and A, "by"; Y, "three no-trumps"; all "by." Result: small slam for Z-Y.

The correspondent who furnished this hand also suggests an "ultra-conservative bidding"—which pleases me much better, and with which I can readily agree:

Z, "a spade."

A, "by."

Y, "a royal," or "a no-trump." Every one "by." Z-Y can make a small slam in either royals or no-trumps.

Test-Hand No. 13

This hand came from West Newton. Score love-all on the first game:

♥ K Q J 10 8		
♣ 10 9 5		
♦ K 6		
♠ J 3 2		
♥ A 9 7 6 5	Y	♥ 4
♣ A 3 2	A	♣ Q 7 6 4
♦ J 5		♦ 8 7 2
♠ K 6 5	B	♠ A 10 9 8 7
	Z	
♥ 3 2		
♣ K J 8		
♦ A Q 10 9 4 3		
♠ Q 4		

The actual bidding ran as follows: Z, "one diamond"; A, "one heart" (very poor, indeed); Y, "no"; B, "one royal"; Z, "two diamonds"; A, "two royals"; Y and B, "no"; Z, "three diamonds"; A, "no"; Y, "three hearts." Closed.

I should bid the hand thus:

Z, "one diamond."

A, "no."

Y, "one heart." (A major-suit is better than a minor one on a clean score, and Y has 64 honors.)

B, "a royal."

Z, "two diamonds." (His ace and his king might be "a trick and a raiser" for the hearts; but one of them,—the ace, has already been announced.)

A, "two royals."

Y, "three hearts." Closed.

Some correspondents had the hand played at hearts; others at doubled hearts; others at royals; and others at diamonds. Three different suits on the same hand.

And a fourth might be added now; look at A-B's chance to bid "nullos"; of course, they have high cards, but they also have low ones in the same suit. Except in the spade-suit, their hand is a wonderful "nullo." And Z would be forced to take the second spade-round and could never lead it again. Y could lead it but once more.

A would be the original "nullo"-hand and B could raise him. They could make four-odd. Of course, Z-Y would never permit them to play it. But if Y went to "four hearts," he would be set. And if Z went to "five diamonds"

he would be badly beaten, and would have only 28 honors as an off-set.

Test-Hand No. 14

A correspondent who signed himself "Prospero" sent me this wonderful hand; I am indebted to him for a number of interesting hands and he is evidently an expert player. Nevertheless I am forced to differ with him here.

This particular hand was framed, by another reader of *The Times*, as "the most wonderful Auction lesson" he had ever seen.

The bidding was opened with "three spades" (as a call to royals) on a combination of cards that was a distinct royal-bid in itself. How any one could hold six spades to the ace-king and three otheraces (one a singleton) and ask his partner to make the trump is a mystery to me. You "call" for royals when you are strong enough to help, but not to make alone. You certainly do not "call" when you have a perfectly splendid royal-make yourself. I will give you "Prospero's" hand, which was bid at three separate tables, designated as "Prospero's four," "four fairies," and "four juniors"; the score is love-all on the first game:

♥ 7 5 3		
♣ K 7 6		
♦ K Q J 10 8 4 3		
♠ —		
♥ —	Y	♥ K Q J 10 8 4 2
♣ Q J 10 9 8 3 2	A	♣ —
♦ 9 7 5 2	B	♦ 6
♠ 6 4	Z	♠ Q J 10 9 3
♥ A 9 6		
♣ A 5 4		
♦ A		
♠ A K 8 7 5 2		

I should bid that hand thus:

Z, "a royal"; neglecting his hundred aces because of the singleton, and the awful drop, in hearts and clubs.

A, "by."

Y, "two diamonds," a warning-bid of weakness in partner's suit.

B, "two hearts."

Z, "two no-trumps"—his partner has the suit he lacks. Then it is up to the individuals how high the bidding shall run between the heart hand and the no-trump hand.

At "Prospero's" table this was the bidding:

Z, "three spades"; A, "two clubs" (A should never help Z out of the hole, especially on a queen-suit); Y, "two diamonds"; B, "two hearts"; Z, "two royals"; A and Y, "by"; B, "three hearts"; Z, "three royals"; B, "four hearts"; Z, "four no-trumps." Result, grand slam for Z and Y.

The "fairies" bid it:

Z, "a royal"; A, "two clubs"; Y, "two diamonds"; B, "two hearts"; Z, "two royals"; B, "three hearts"; Z, "three no-trumps"; B, "four hearts"; Z, "double"; B, "redouble." Z-Y took eight tricks before B could get "in." They should have taken only seven, but a thousand points are rather nice, don't you think so? The value of four rubbers.

The "juniors" bid thus:

Z, "five spades" (hearts too weak); A, "two clubs"; Y, "two diamonds"; B, "two hearts"; Z, "two no-trumps"; B, "three hearts"; Z, "three royals," and was "set for three tricks."

At the first table Z-Y made a grand slam in no-trumps with 100 aces—a total of 210 points and game-in. At Table 2 they made 1000 points minus 64, a total of 936, and at Table 3 they lost 150 points. Which would you choose at a dollar a point?

Test-Hand No. 15

♥ K 6 5 3 2

♣ 5

♦ 9 6 4

♠ 10 7 6 4

♥ A 4

♣ K Q 3 2

♦ A K J 3

♠ K 8 3

	Y	
A		B
	Z	

♥ Q 10 8 7

♣ A J 6 4

♦ 8 2

♠ A 5 2

♥ J 9

♣ 10 9 8 7

♦ Q 10 7 5

♠ Q J 9

This hand shows the futility of bidding nullos when your partner has opened with "a spade." The score was 20-24 on the first game in favor of Z-Y. Z opened with "a spade"; A said "a no-trump"; Y was so struck with his own low hand that he forgot that his partner had denied a hand that could help nullos. He bid "two nullos." B said "two no-trumps," and Z passed thankfully. Surely now his tale was told. But Y went to "three nullos" and was doubled by B.

Of course, he thought afterwards that Z

"should have taken him out." What could Z have done? He first denied a nullo-hand, by bidding "a spade." Then he passed, showing positively that he had not a nullo-assist. There was nothing further that could be expected of him.

The opening-lead was the eight of diamonds.

Test-Hand No. 16

This came from Ithaca. It was the first hand on the second game, and Z-Y were a game in.

♥ J 10 9 8 4 2		
♣ —		
♦ A J 5		
♠ Q 7 4 2		
♥ 5	Y	♥ A K Q 7 6 3
♣ A Q J 10 9 7 6 3	A	♣ —
♦ 10 7	B	♦ K 8 6 3
♠ A 6	Z	♠ K J 8
♥ —		
♣ K 8 5 4 2		
♦ Q 9 4 2		
♠ 10 9 5 3		

This is the original bidding as sent to me:

Z, "one club." (That is pretty weak; I should advise "a spade.")

A, "two clubs." (Correct; even against "a spade" I should be tempted to bid those clubs.)

Y, "two hearts." (I don't like that, even with the club-ruff). B, "double."

Z, "by"; A, "three clubs" (I wonder why he preferred 6 a trick to 100 a trick); Y, "pass"; B, "two no-trumps"; closed. A-B were set for 100 points. If A had let the double stand, look what they could have done. A could have made a short lead—ace of spades; B would have given a "come-on" card—the eight; they would thus have taken three spade-rounds, three heart-rounds, and the king of diamonds even if they did n't make a club. They would have won 200 instead of losing 100.

Test-Hand No. 17

This interesting hand came from Pittsfield. It was a clean score.

♥ —		♥ —
♣ Q 8 6 3 2		♣ 9 5 4
♦ K 9 8		♦ —
♠ J 9 8 5 3		♠ A 6 4
♥ J 9 4 2	Y	♥ K 10 8 7 6 5 3
♣ K 10 7	A	♣ —
♦ A J 7 6 5 2	B	
♠ —	Z	
♥ A Q		
♣ A J		
♦ Q 10 4 3		
♠ K Q 10 7 2		

The original Z opened with "a royal." Either that or "a no-trump" would be perfectly correct; I should choose the latter on a clean score. The answers received are about equally divided between the two bids. A then said "two diamonds," Y "two royals," B "three hearts," and Z doubled. I should have hesitated over that double. "A weak double is worse than a weak make." If B bids three, lacking his own ace and queen, he is going to do some ruffing.

Here are samples of some of the bids submitted. The first opens with "a no-trump," A says "two diamonds," Y "two no-trumps," B "double," Z "redouble," and takes four-odd.

Another opens with "a royal," A bids "two diamonds," Y "two royals," B "three hearts," Z "three royals," and A "four hearts," which Z doubles, but loses. Still another opens with "three spades," which Y changes to royals, and Z finally plays the hand at "three royals."

Test-Hand No. 18

This hand was played at West Point, and occasioned much discussion:

♥	3 2
♣	10 9 6
♦	9 5 2
♠	J 9 8 6 4

♥	K Q 9 7
♣	7 5 4 3
♦	J 10 6
♠	Q 10

		Y		
A			B	
		Z		

♥	A J 10 8 6 5
♣	A Q 8 2
♦	3
♠	5 2

♥	4
♣	K J
♦	A K Q 8 7 4
♠	A K 7 3

The score was love-all on the rubber game, and this was the original bidding:

Z, "a diamond."

A and Y, "pass."

B, "one heart."

Z, "two diamonds."

A, "two hearts."

Y and B, "pass."

Z, "three diamonds."

A, "three hearts." (With only two possible tricks in his hand, A should certainly wait to hear from the original heart-hand. He has no suit-support.)

Y and B, "pass."

Z, "four diamonds."

A and Y, "pass."

B, "four hearts."

Z, "five diamonds."

A "double." (I think it was the most astounding double I ever heard. On what was it made?)

Z says that if he had the hand to play again he should certainly redouble; being in so deep, he might as well go deeper. He counted "four diamond tricks in his own hand, four spade tricks" (rather optimistic), "and a club trick." He made his bid, going game and rubber.

Many correspondents opened this hand with

"two spades"; Y responded with "a royal,"—and after that royals were bid by Z-Y up to four, and even five.

Test-Hand No. 19

This came from Boston. The score was 24-0 on the rubber-game, in favor of Z-Y.

♥ A Q 8 4		
♣ A 7		
♦ A 6 5		
♠ K 8 7 4		
♥ J 6 5	Y	♥ K 7 2
♣ K 9 8 6 3 2	A	♣ Q J 10 4
♦ K 8 2		♦ Q J 10
♠ 6	B	♠ A Q 10
	Z	
♥ 10 9 3		
♣ 5		
♦ 9 7 4 3		
♠ J 9 5 3 2		

Z must open with "a spade" or "three spades," according to whether he does, or does not, use the "three spade" call for royals. In this hand it would be very useful.

A should pass "three spades"; the score

might induce him to bid his clubs against "one spade." They are weak, but they might help B to a declaration and A-B want "game in the hand."

Y should say "a no-trump" in the event of Z's "one spade," and "a royal," if Z has said "three spades."

The original B did exactly what I should do; he bid "two no-trumps" over Y's "one no-trump." He wanted game, and he did n't see it in clubs. And he took his chance of it at no-trumps.

Should Y bid "a no-trump" and B pass, Z must positively bid "two royals." His hand would kill no-trumps.

The original bidding was: Z "a spade," A "a club," Y "a no-trump," and B "two no-trumps." Every one "by."

Test-Hand No. 20

This was sent me from Biarritz, and the original bidding was not given. The score is love-all on the rubber-game:

♥ A 6 4 3		
♣ J 8 7 6		
♦ J 4 2		
♠ 7 3		
♥ Q 9 7 5 2	Y	♥ K 10
♣ K 9 5 4	A B	♣ Q 10
♦ Q 8	Z	♦ A K 10
♠ 4 2		♠ K 10 9 8 6 5
♥ J 8		
♣ A 3 2		
♦ 9 7 6 5 3		
♠ A Q J		

Z must open that hand with "one spade" or "two spades"; those who use the call will admit that his hand fills the bill: "two quick tricks in spades and a side-ace."

Personally, I should bid that hand "one spade"; it does not impress me as a hand that is "too good to waste."

If Z opens with "a spade," every one passes and he loses 100 less simple honors—or 96 points. If he opens with "two spades" A will pass, and Y will have to bid either "a royal" or "a no-trump." Were I B, I should pass either bid; the royal-bid should be passed, because it is obvious that B can set it. He will

make 100 less simple honors, or 82 points. The two-spade call in this case is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage; it saves just 14 points—the difference between spade-honors and royal-honors.

If Y bids "a no-trump," I (as B) should pass. I know this will seem absurd to those who want to play every hand. Passing on good hands, using them as a means of attack rather than of defense, is an idea that many players cannot grasp. B knows that Y's bid is forced; he knows that he himself holds a very fair no-trumper. With the score at love-all he should take a chance on setting the forced bid; this he can do. By bidding royals he cannot go game, and good penalties are better than partial games. B knows, of course, that the ace and queen of spades are with Z and will spoil his chances of "game in the hand."

N. B.—If players would only learn to pass on good hands, to pass conventional bids and forced bids—these latter would soon die a natural death. They depend largely for their existence on the bids of the adversaries; why these adversaries should be so obliging as to step in and relieve the situation is beyond my comprehension. I know a few players who are wise enough to leave conventional bids and forced bids in the hands of their creators; it is amusing to see what a poor showing these bids make against such a defense. They absolutely presuppose that on those occasions when the good cards lie against the deal their holders will not have sense enough to sit still.

Test-Hand No. 21

♠ K 8 3 2
 ♣ 7 3
 ♦ 9 7 6 5
 ♡ A 10 6

♠ A Q J 7 6
 ♣ Q 8 6 5
 ♦ J 8
 ♡ Q 9

	Y	
A		B
	Z	

♠ 10 9 5 4
 ♣ A J 10 9
 ♦ A K
 ♡ K J 7

♠ —
 ♣ K 4 2
 ♦ Q 10 4 3 2
 ♡ 8 5 4 3 2

This hand shows the value of nulos as a forcing-bid.

Z opened with "a nullo."

A, "a heart."

Y, "two nulos."

B, "two hearts."

Z, "three nulos."

A and Y, "no."

B, "three hearts."

Z and A, "no."

Y, "four nulos."

B, "four hearts."

Z, "five nullos."

A, "five hearts." Closed.

A-B lost the king of trumps, the ace of spades, and the king of clubs. Without nullos, Z-Y would not even have been in the game. A-B would have dealt them one knock-out blow, and that would have been the end.

Test-Hand No. 22

This hand was originally played in Waterbury, and I was asked to decide how long two partners should continue to bid against each other on these cards:

♥	K 6
♣	K J 10 8 6
♦	10 5
♠	A 7 3 2

♥	9 8 3
♣	A 2
♦	K
♠	K Q J 10 9 8 6

		Y
A		
		B
		Z

♥	J 10 4 2
♣	3
♦	A Q J 9 8 6 3 2
♠	—

♥	A Q 7 5
♣	Q 9 7 5 4
♦	7 4
♠	5 4

I think that after one warning over-call of diamonds B should undoubtedly yield and give place to his partner, who holds a better suit. True, B holds beautiful diamonds, a club-singleton, and is chicane in spades; on the other hand, for aught he knows, A may be equally chicane in diamonds. B holds but 14 honors and a suit that is worth 7 a trick; his partner holds a suit that is worth 9 a trick and a possible 90 honors; B should certainly stop after one warning of his inability to help.

Test-Hand No. 23

This hand was played in duplicate boards, by four sets of players. When you play Auction in duplicate boards the rubber is eliminated; but it is always taken for granted that the score is "love-all" on each hand, and the effort should always be to score "game on the hand" (30 or more trick points).

♥ K 10 7		
♣ K 10 7 6 3 2		
♦ A 5 3		
♠ K		
	Y	
♥ J 5 3	A	B
♣ —		
♦ K 9 8 7 6 4		
♠ J 10 3 2	Z	
♥ A Q		
♣ J 9		
♦ Q J 2		
♠ A Q 9 8 6 5		
♥ 9 8 6 4 2		
♣ A Q 8 5 4		
♦ 10		
♠ 7 4		

At the first table the bidding was correct, according to my ideas. It ran thus:

Z, "a club."

A, "a diamond."

Y, "two clubs."

B, "two royals." Of course, B can raise his partner's diamonds; but why play diamonds which need five-odd for a game when you might play royals and go game in four-odd?

Z and A, "by."

Y, "three clubs."

B, "three royals,"—and made five-odd with 36 honors.

At table two, B's royals were never mentioned. The bidding ran: Z, "a club"; A, "a diamond"; Y, "two clubs"; B, "two diamonds"; Z and A "by"; Y, "three clubs"; B, "three diamonds"; Z and A, "by"; Y, "four clubs"; B, "double."

At one table Y made his four clubs doubled. At another table the bid was defeated by one trick. It all depends upon whether Z does or does not take a heart finesse in Y's hand.

At the third table Z opened with "a club," A and Y passed, and B bid his royal. Then clubs were bid up to three, and "three royals" carried the day. And at the fourth table B raised A's diamonds on the first round, and went to his own suit (royals) on the second round.

A correspondent wrote me that they tried this hand at a table of four men, and at another table of four women, with widely different results. The men bid thus: Z, "a spade"; A, "by"; Y, "a club"; B, "a royal"; Z, "two clubs"; A, "two royals"; Y, "three clubs"; B, "three royals"; Z, "five clubs"; A and Y, "by"; B, "four royals." My correspondent adds that he thinks B should have doubled rather than bid.

At the women's table this was the bidding; Z, "a club"; A, "a diamond"; Y, "a no-trump"; B, "two diamonds"; Z and A, "by"; Y, "three clubs"; B, "three diamonds"; Z and A, "by";

Y, "four clubs"; B, "three royals"; Z, "double"; A, "four diamonds"; Y, "five clubs"; A, "five diamonds"; Y, "double"; A, "redouble."

You would hardly know it was the same hand that was under discussion.

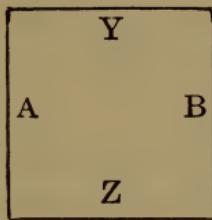
Many proposals reached me for no-trump bids from Y. The objection to them is thus cleverly stated by an unknown correspondent: "Bidding in Y's place, I should reason thus: Z has probably five clubs, making eleven in the two hands; quite probably, therefore, some other suit must lie almost entirely in A-B's hand." That is clever reasoning and is a strong argument against any high no-trump bid from Y; his spade singleton should deter him.

Test-Hand No. 24

This came from Boston. Score: Love-all.

♥ 9 4 2
 ♣ A 2
 ♦ K Q 10 7 3
 ♠ 10 9 4

♥ 7 6 3
 ♣ 9 8 7 6 5 3
 ♦ 9
 ♠ A 7 3



♥ J 10 8 5
 ♣ —
 ♦ A J 8 5 2
 ♠ J 8 6 2

♥ A K Q
 ♣ K Q J 10 4
 ♦ 6 4
 ♠ K Q 5

About this hand I can see no question. Z should certainly open with "a no-trump"; the score demands that bid, rather than the club; he holds but one unprotected suit, and his hand is two kings and two queens better than a standard no-trumper. Every one else should pass, unless Y felt inclined to over-call with "two diamonds," on his short clubs and worthless hearts and spades. If he did, Z should answer with "two no-trumps," and that would end it.

But the original hand was bid quite differently. Z opened with "a club," A doubled (why should he double when it was absolutely the only suit he wanted to play? Of course, some one would jump). Y said "a diamond," B doubled (oh, those doubles of one-bids!) Z said "two clubs," A doubled, Z redoubled, and the bidding closed. Z took four-odd; his score was 42 for honors, 54 minus 12 for chicane; 96 points, 100 contract, 200 extra tricks. A total of 438 on a club bid!

Do you happen to remember any past warnings from me regarding doubling one-bids?

Test-Hand No. 25

This came from Rochester. It was the first deal on the rubber-game.

♥ A Q 7 5 4 3 2

♣ J 7 3 2

♦ —

♠ K 9

♥ K

♣ A 10 8

♦ K 10 7 2

♠ A Q J 10 4

	Y	
A		B
	Z	

♥ J 10 9 8 6

♣ K Q 9 5

♦ Q 4

♠ 3 2

♥ —

♣ 6 4

♦ A J 9 8 6 5 3

♠ 8 7 6 5

The original bidding ran: Z, "a diamond"; A, "a royal"; Y, "two hearts"; B, "by"; Z, "three diamonds"; A, "double"; Y, "three hearts"; B, "double"; Z, "by"; A, "three royals," closed. "In the play, A took the first trick, which was a club-lead, and made the mistake of leading his king of hearts instead of trumps, thus allowing Z-Y to establish their cross-ruff and take five tricks before A had another look-in."

The correspondent who sent me this hand, said he considered A's double a mistake; he thought he should have bid royals, on account of his 72 honors.

A ruff in the long trump-hand can always be taken, even after the adversaries' trumps are exhausted. You need never be in a hurry to get it. It is only when the shorter and weaker hand can ruff, that you play for ruffs before you exhaust trumps (except in the case of a cross-ruff).

If A were to play that hand at royals, Y's proper lead was the ace of hearts. With seven hearts in his own hand, he did n't want to risk getting his ace ruffed.

And why should A want to change his partner's double to a bid? At three hearts doubled, A-B could have made 400 plus 16 for simple honors. Is n't that better than 90 honors? Is n't it better than game? Or even better than rubber? *One* of B's doubled tricks is worth more than A's 90 honors; and B's hundreds begin the moment he has taken *four* tricks, not *six*.

Test-Hand No. 26

This came from Orange. (It is one of the most interesting and puzzling hands, I have ever received). (The score is 18-0, on the rubber-game, in favor of A-B).

♥ 6 4 3		
♣ K 10 7 6 5		
♦ K Q 7		
♠ 9 4		
	Y A B Z	
♥ K J 10 8 7 5		♥ —
♣ A 8 3		♣ Q J 9 4 2
♦ 10 9 3 2		♦ 8 5
♠ —		♠ K Q J 10 6 3
♥ A Q 9 2		
♣ —		
♦ A J 6 4		
♠ A 8 7 5 2		

In the original hand Z bid "one royal," and I approve of the bid. He has not a legitimate seven-point bid; but he has five trumps headed by the ace, two side-suits, each holding the ace and another face card, and a blank suit; his trumps, moreover, are just the sort with which to ruff that suit. Even if he should lose (which does not look probable) he could hardly lose more than two-odd, which would be no more than he would lose if he played spades. And "a royal" will start the adversaries to bidding, which "a spade" would not.

I should certainly *not* want Z to bid "a no-trump with a blank suit, and no strong sequences.

He has his choice between "a no-trump" "a royal," "a spade," or "two spades" (and for this latter bid he has not quite the requisite material; yet it would be correct, because he is willing to play either no-trumps or royals,—whichever his partner may prefer).

The two-spade bid, or the royal-bid would certainly be his best choice,—according to my ideas.

A, "two hearts." (Correct, of course).

Y went by, most luckily. Y has a possible raise on his two side kings—one is a "trick," and the other is "a raiser"; but it would have been the lightest possible assistance on which to say "two royals," and Y, fortunately, did not make the bid.

B bid "two royals," on 72 honors and because he lacked his partner's suit. I should certainly have done the same; his suit is in such close sequence that he need not fear the hand that is "over" him.

Z doubled—and that I do not like. He ran the risk of frightening A back to hearts, and even though A would undertake a heavier contract, if I were Z I should rather play against "two royals" than "three hearts." His position is better for royals—after the maker instead of before him. And his royals are much better for trumping clubs than his hearts would be.

If Z drives A to hearts Z's own heart-queen will be in jeopardy, and he will not care to weaken his hand with many club-ruffs. However, he doubled two royals.

A bid "three hearts," Z doubled again, and the hand was played at that. Had I been B I should have returned to royals, in spite of poor position. Those 72 honors would have been my comfort.

Nevertheless, Z's double of the "two royals" worked beautifully, for he defeated A badly at three hearts. The trouble lay in the fact that B had no hearts to lead through Z's ten-ace, and the position of the diamond-suit; A's trump hand was long in low diamonds and B's short diamond hand held no trumps.

The original A took but four tricks, which was one too few. Y led correctly the nine of spades, B covered, Z played ace and A trumped. He then made the mistake of leading a low club to clear Dummy's re-entry. He should have led trumps, even up to the doubling hand—because it would be pulling two for one. The moment he sees B is chicane, he knows that Z's queen and ace of trumps must both take—they may as well take first as last. By leading the ten of trumps, A makes five tricks, including the ace of clubs.

Should A elect to lead clubs, he should lead the ace; that is the better way to clear Dummy's re-entry, and A holds enough small clubs to lead again when it is clear. By leading a small club he gives Y the king and Z a discard.

If B had gone back to royals, his 72 honors would have cut down his losses. The special questions I was asked to decide were whether B was justified in bidding "two royals" when Z had bid one, and whether A should have gone to hearts after the royals were doubled. Both were right.

A later letter from the correspondent, who sent this hand, made the same objection to Z's double of "two royals" that I have already made. Though it worked, it was poor reasoning; moreover, (as this letter says,) Z did not know that he would not chase one of his adversaries to clubs — which could not have suited him at all. This subsequent letter gave what I consider the only perfect solution of the situation.

The popular opinion of Z's correct opening-lead was "one no-trump." I should dislike it exceedingly.

Z would have an excellent nullo-bid, and Y could raise it. They could force beautifully with their nullos.

Test-Hand No. 27

This hand came from Brookline. The score was 24-20 on the rubber-game, in favor of A-B.

♥ J 7 6 3 2		
♣ 7 6 5		
♦ 6		
♠ 10 7 6 3		
♥ K 10 4	Y	♥ A Q 9 5
♣ K 3	A	♣ Q 9 8 2
♦ K J 7 4		♦ Q 5 3
♠ K J 5 4	B	♠ Q 8
	Z	
♥ 8		
♣ A J 10 4		
♦ A 10 9 8 2		
♠ A 9 2		

In the original hand, Z bid "a no-trump" and every one else passed. Z won the rubber on his bid; A led his smallest diamond; B took it with the queen and returned his five-spot, which A took with the jack; he then led the seven, which was very remarkable; Dummy had already shown a singleton, and B, in returning the five-spot, had placed the ace, the ten, and the nine, all in Z's hand. That lead was a gift.

However, Z won the third round with his nine-spot, and led his eight of hearts; I quote the explanation:

"Z realized that if his adversaries opened hearts it would be all up with him, so he took the chance of finding the suit fairly evenly divided between A and B, and of causing them both to think that he was well fixed in the suit; it was a long chance, a forlorn hope, but it worked to perfection."

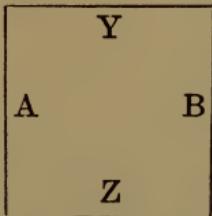
At that score, I (as Z) would have opened with "a diamond." And again at that score, I cannot imagine any one holding A's cards and passing. I should have A bid "a no-trump" over Z's diamond bid, or "two no-trumps" over Z's "one no-trump." A's position is excellent for this; his bid would save rubber even if defeated, and the chance of setting Z's one-bid is slight—and not to be compared with taking the rubber.

Y has a very pretty chance to bid nulos, and Z could readily respond, in order to "keep the flag flying."

Test-Hand No. 28

♠ 5 4 2
 ♣ 7 6 4 2
 ♦ 9 8 6 5
 ♡ K 3

♠ J 8 6
 ♣ A K
 ♦ A Q J 10 4
 ♡ Q 9 5



♠ K Q 10 9 7 3
 ♣ Q J 10 9 8 5 3
 ♦ —
 ♡ —

♠ A
 ♣ —
 ♦ K 7 3 2
 ♡ A J 10 8 7 6 4 2

It is the first hand of the rubber-game and A-B are 248 ahead in honors.

My idea of the proper bidding on this hand is the following:

Z, "a royal."

A, "two diamonds."

Y, "pass."

B, "two hearts" (a warning that his partner's suit will not fit his hand). It would also be correct for B to say "three clubs" on his two missing suits. This bid would give him a seven-card suit for ruffing diamonds and spades, and a

king-queen side-suit. However, the "process of elimination" calls for the heart-bid; it is also less of a contract, and a better suit in which to go game on a clean score.

Z, "two royals."

A, "three hearts."

Y and B, "pass."

Z, "three royals."

A, "four hearts."

Z, "four royals" to save rubber. His diamonds are in a poor position and his partner is silent, but the rubber is at stake.

Z cannot take more than three-odd in royals, against the best defense. One correspondent gave him four-odd, but that was because he allowed A to lead out his ace of diamonds after taking the first diamond round. A should never do this; he should force Z with clubs or hearts, and make Z lead diamonds to him.

In hearts A-B can make a small slam. A should bid them to five, at least; after that I think he would feel safer in defeating Z.

The original bidding on the hand was as follows:

Z, "a spade."

A, "a diamond." This is the first mistake; a good player in A's place would have passed instead of helping Z out of the hole. Then it

would be interesting to know what poor Y would be expected to do. The only thing that saves these spade-makes on strong hands is that the adversaries are so unwise as to bid against them.

Y, "pass."

B, "a heart."

Z, "a royal."

A, "a no-trump" ("two hearts" would be much better because of the short black suits).

Y and B "pass." (B's pass is a mistake; he should never permit no-trumps with two blank-suits. Think what he could do to those suits with either hearts or clubs for trumps!)

Z, "two royalties."

A and Y, "pass."

B, "three hearts."

Z, "three royalties."

A, "three no-trumps."

Y and B "pass," and the question put to me was, "What should Z do, and why?" Also, "What was wrong in the bidding?"

Z-Y have a wonderful nullo opportunity!

Test-Hand No. 29

♠ A 7 2
 ♣ Q J 8 7
 ♦ J 8 6 3
 ♡ 8 3

♠ 9 4 3
 ♣ 3
 ♦ K Q 10 2
 ♡ J 9 7 6 2

Y

A
Z

♠ K Q J 10 6 5
 ♣ A 10 5
 ♦ 9 4
 ♡ 10 4

♠ 8
 ♣ K 9 6 4 2
 ♦ A 7 5
 ♡ A K Q 5

The score was love-all on a new rubber and the original Z opened with "two spades," as a call for no-trumps. He had the standard two-spade call—"two tricks in spades, and one outside ace, leaving partner to decide between no-trumps and royals." A passed, and Y said, "a club," which I think was very remarkable; he holds three protected suits, and is but one king below the average hand; in the place of that king he holds a jack. He has almost an independent no-trumper, and should certainly have responded to the no-trump invitation. B bid hearts, and

Z raised the clubs to four, which closed the bidding. Y played "four clubs" and made them. When the hand was over Z was severely criticised for his failure to open with "a no-trump," and asked my opinion.

Of course, Z had the no-trump call, but I think his hand was too good to call; he should have bid the no-trump. He has but one unprotected suit, and his hand is well above the average—two aces, two kings, and the rest as it should be. Failing the no-trump, he should have bid "a royal." To the score I should choose the no-trump. The singleton heart is a drawback to either make; with only four trumps you cannot do much ruffing.

One correspondent opened with "a no-trump," B bid hearts, and Y answered with "two no-trumps." B had then his choice of setting the bid and forfeiting his 64 honors,—or of bidding "three hearts." At this he could be slightly set provided Z—Y were clever enough to kill the ruff in the weak hand. Z should lead ace, then king, of spades, and Y should echo. Then, with the object of killing Dummy's club-ruff,—Z should lead his trump, Y should take with the ace and lead again. Thus Dummy could ruff clubs only once, instead of twice. B would lose the ace of trumps, two rounds of spades, the ace

of diamonds, and the king of clubs. He would lose 50 undoubled, or 100 doubled, and would have 64 honors, as an off-set.

Test-Hand No. 30

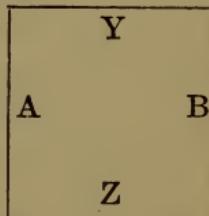
♥ 9 8 6 4 3

♣ 5 2

♦ K 9 8 6 2

♠ 3

♥ J
♣ 9 8 4
♦ Q 10 5
♠ K J 10 7 5 4



♥ K Q 7 5 2
♣ A
♦ A 3
♠ Q 9 8 6 2

♥ A 10
♣ K Q J 10 7 6 3
♦ J 7 4
♠ A

It was the rubber-game and the score was 27-18, in favor of Z-Y.

Clubs and royals were bid against each other until Z-Y went to "six clubs"; A-B doubled and made 300. But the very next hand Z-Y went rubber on a small slam in hearts with 64 honors. That, of course, could not be foreseen, but it made A-B wish they had bid their royals up above the clubs on the previous hand, and closed

the rubber on their own account. Could they have seen each other's hands they would certainly have done so. Doubling is good, but rubber is generally better.

The remarkable thing about this hand is that the ten of diamonds is the vital card.

Test-Hand No. 31

This came from Long Island. It was the first deal on the rubber-game.

♥ A 6		
♣ K J 10 8 5 4		
♦ J		
♠ K 10 7 6		
♥ K Q J 9 8 5	Y	♥ 10 7 4 3
♣ A 9 6 2	A	♣ Q 7
♦ 9 4		♦ A 10 8 6
♠ 5	B	♠ A 8 4
	Z	
♥ 2		
♣ 3		
♦ K Q 7 5 3 2		
♠ Q J 9 3 2		

The original bidding ran as follows:

Z, "a diamond."

A, "a heart."

Y, "a royal."

I don't like that at all; Y has a "royal-assist," but certainly not a royal-bid; four trumps to the king-ten is far too light for a bid, even with good side-suits. The value of the diamond singleton is destroyed, because ruffs are too expensive when you hold but four trumps. What was the matter with a "two club" bid from Y—or even a "two diamond,"—or "a no-trump"? The diamond singleton and short hearts would weaken the latter; but it would certainly be better than the royal. *Never bid on a four-card suit, unless three of the four cards are honors,—and one of those honors is ace or king!*

However—

Y, "a royal."

B, "two hearts."

Z, "two royals" (naturally).

A, "three hearts."

Y and B, "by."

Z, "three royals."

A, "four hearts."

Rather high. A holds seven losing cards—one trump, because he lacks the ace; one royal, two diamonds, and three clubs. Those are all "losers." His partner has raised once, which shows two "takers"—a trick and a raiser. Two takers from seven losers leaves five losers, or a

two-bid; and A is making a four-bid. A should wait and see whether his partner can announce another raiser.

Y and B, "pass."

Z, "four royals." Closed. Z-Y lost contract by one trick. He should have made it.

The error in that hand was Y's initial bid; every one of Z's raises was legitimate. Z has two trump tricks and three side raisers—his two singletons and the king of diamonds. The latter, of course, had been announced in his opening-bid. Even though Y could take four-odd, his bid was wrong. It was unusual luck to find so many trumps and *two* singletons in Z's hand. When submitted to the readers of the *Times*, this hand was variously played at "five diamonds"; at "four royals" and set; at "four royals" and not set; at "three no-trumps" doubled; and at "three hearts."

Test-Hand No. 32

This hand came from Peekskill; no bidding was given and my advice was asked. The score was love-all on the first game:

♥ J 3		
♣ 5 4 3		
♦ A K Q 10 5		
♠ Q J 8		
♥ K	Y	♥ 10 6 5 4
♣ A K J 10 9	A	♣ 8 7 2
♦ 6 2		♦ 9 7 4
♠ A K 6 4 3	B	♠ 10 7 2
	Z	
♥ A Q 9 8 7 2		
♣ Q 6		
♦ J 8 3		
♠ 9 5		

This would be my bidding:

Z, "a heart"; A, "a royal," in spite of those clubs. The club honors are 48, I know, but it takes five-odd to go game in clubs, and only four-odd in royals; I should always rather play a major-suit, with a clean score, and the clubs would make a splendid side-suit. It would be perfectly correct for A to say either "two

clubs" or "one royal," but I should choose the latter.

Then Y has his choice of raising his partner's hearts (holding an honor and a splendid side-suit) or of showing his own diamonds. I should show the diamonds and let Z fit that information to his own hand. It is not as though Y's bid were the initial-bid, for his side. His partner has already bid in a major-suit; if Y mentions his diamonds, it may help in the ensuing decision. And if he is left to play them, he will have his 56 honors. If Z's hand warrants a two-bid in hearts, he can make it without increase in contract; if it does not,—then the diamonds are better.

Some players, holding Y's cards, would bid no-trump on partner's hearts, diamond-suit solid, and sequence stopper in spades. This, of course, if A did not bid clubs; if he did, no-trumps would be killed for Y, and I don't like it anyhow. I, as Y, should say "two diamonds." B must pass, unless he is playing nulos.

Z can pass, or say "two hearts." He has an honor in his partner's suit, and Y's bid of diamonds would look as though he had not much heart-help. Of course, it is not as though Y had made an "over-call"—that is, if he had changed Z's hearts to diamonds, with no intervening bid.

The over-call would have been a positive warning of heart-weakness. Y's diamonds are a minor-suit, and Z's hearts a major-suit. I think I (as Z) should say "two hearts," and should use the diamonds for side-suit.

A has had no signal of royal-help from his partner; he can try the "shift" and go to "three clubs" to get his honors and to try to strike an answering spark; or he can say "two royals." And I should emphatically say royals; it is a lower bid, and is worth as much. A has the certainty of losing one trump-round, two diamond-rounds, and the king of hearts. That is four lost tricks; his hand warrants a bid of "three royals," even with no response from B.

Z-Y can bid hearts to three but not to four. Therefore the bid should close at A's "three royals." It is not the rubber-game, so there is no excuse for expensive flag-flying. If A-B can be prevented from going game, Z-Y would be wiser to hold them down than to risk being penalized.

When this hand was given in the *Times*, it brought scores of answers. It was played at hearts, at doubled hearts, at diamonds, at doubled diamonds, at royals, and at clubs. No wonder the original players wanted advice as to bidding.

Test-Hand No. 33

Here is one of the most interesting hands I ever saw; it came to me from Northampton:

♥ A Q 8 6		
♣ Q 6 5		
♦ A 7 3		
♠ Q J 6		
♥ —	Y	♥ K J 10 9 7 4 3 2
♣ A J 10 9 4 2	A	♣ 7
♦ K Q 10 9 4	B	♦ J 6
♠ A 8	Z	♠ 9 2
♥ 5		
♣ K 8 3		
♦ 8 5 2		
♠ K 10 8 7 5 4		

This hand holds tremendous possibilities both of bid and of play. A-B are one game in, and this is the first hand of the second game.

I cannot imagine any dealer opening that hand with "a spade," rather than "a royal." Of course, as I have already told you, the most conservative authorities demand either the ace, or the king-queen, for a first-round bid. Z has neither, but I certainly think it would be a waste

of golden opportunities for him to say "a spade." To my mind, he should not hesitate a moment in bidding "a royal." He has an eight-point make running to the king, a side-singleton, and a well-guarded side-king. Let us, therefore, imagine him to say a "royal."

A must choose between "two diamonds" and "two clubs." The "process of elimination" demands the former, although the latter gives him one extra trump with which to ruff his blank-suit. We will imagine him to say "two diamonds."

Y's choice is between "two royals" and "two no-trumps." I should choose the former with that beautiful raising hand; three trumps to two honors and two side-aces for "raisers" are all that the most exacting of partners could demand. And royals are almost as valuable as no-trumps.

On the other hand, Y's hand perfectly warrants a two no-trump bid if he prefers it. No one could criticize it; I merely prefer to have the third-hand "dovetail" his bid with his partner's, unless his suit is infinitely more valuable. Y knows that his hand and his partner's will "fit" in royals; he does not know whether they will fit, or not, in no-trumps.

Let us suppose that Y bids "two royals"; B will be almost sure to say "three hearts."

As Z, I should not say "three royals" unless to save rubber; if B's bid would give him rubber I should bid. But as it would not I should pass. Z holds a losing heart, three losing diamonds, two losing clubs, and at least one losing trump (because he has not his own ace). That makes seven losing cards. Y has shown an ability to take two rounds—that is, he has shown "a trick, and a raiser." But, even so, that leaves five losing cards—a two-bid, but not a three-bid. Unless Y can take a third round, "three royals" would not go through. Z should pass and leave Y the choice of a raise.

A does not greatly care for the fact that he is chican in his partner's suit; on the other hand, his cards hardly warrant a warning-bid of "four clubs," or "four diamonds." And he does not need to make a warning-bid, because he has two perfectly sure tricks for his partner—outside the diamond-suit which he showed by his bid. A passes.

Y would have a right to say "three royals" if he chose. He has "a trick" (his queen of trumps) and two "raisers" (his aces). He has used but one of those raisers, and now has a perfect right to use the other. Still, if he stops to count his losing cards, he has six or seven; that is rather a big allowance for a three-bid.

Z-Y can make but the odd in royals; A-B's cross-ruff kills their bid. They would, therefore, lose 100 minus their 36 honors; a total loss of 64 points—but nothing below the line. By permitting B to play three hearts, they lose 24 points, plus simple honors, plus chicane—a total of 56. And they permit A-B to get dangerously near the end of the rubber.

If B goes to four hearts, he will be down one; and if Y bids no-trumps, he can make but the odd—provided B leads properly, his jack of diamonds to his partner's bid.

Test-Hand No. 34

I think this hand is one of those that came to me from California.

♥	Q J 10 7 6 5
♣	10 3
♦	K 9 6 4
♠	J

♥	A
♣	K Q 8 7 5
♦	J 7
♠	K 6 5 4 3

Y	
A	B

♥	K 9 8 3
♣	4 2
♦	A 8 5 3 2
♠	8 7

♥	4 2
♣	A J 9 6
♦	Q 10
♠	A Q 10 9 2

The score is 18 all on the rubber-game.

Z, "a royal."

A, "by" (delighted).

Y, "two hearts" (backward bid of warning, to show weakness in partner's suit).

This would end the bidding if the rubber were not at stake—but two hearts will put Y-Z rubber. Therefore, when B and Z pass, A should bid "three clubs," to save rubber. His

singleton ace of hearts and his spade-king on the safe side of the bid, together with five trumps to the king, queen, all make it probable that his losses will be slighter at three clubs than they would be in losing the rubber by Y's heart-bid.

Y will say nothing further, B will pass, and Z would feel more hopeful of defeating three clubs than of making three royals; his partner's warning bid, and the fact that his trumps are scattered and should be led up to, would combine to make him pass.

A, therefore, plays the hand at three clubs. He loses two tricks—100 undoubled, or 200 doubled. Even that is better than rubber; by allowing Y to play hearts, A loses 24 points, plus 16 honors, plus 250; a total of 290, and definitely ends his chances of the rubber.

Y could bid and make "three hearts," but I do not think he would do it. He would be more apt to wait and see whether Z would give him a raise or would prefer to go back to his own royals. You see, Y lacks the two master-cards of his own suit and holds wretched side-suits. His spade singleton is his only real asset. So he leaves the responsibility to his partner, Z; and Z, on his part, prefers the certainty of defeating A.

A correspondent who sent me the best solution

of this hand had Y play "two hearts," and B, therefore, led. B led a spade, because it is "through strength."

Every one knows this rule of leading through strength, but not one in ten seems to know the remainder of it, "but not through a sequence." There is no object in leading through strength that is sequence-strength, because the strong hand can take the trick and still command the suit. The lead does not cripple him at all.

For this reason I do not like the blind opening-lead through the strength of a declared suit (unless the leader plays a singleton). Because in leading through declared strength you do not know till you see the hand whether or not it is sequence-strength. If it is, the lead will hurt you more than it hurts the adversary.

In this particular case, Z's spade-strength is not sequence-strength. But B does not know that when he leads. I have seen more harm than good come of such leads. Be sure to remember the whole of the rule: "Lead through strength, but not through a sequence."

Test-Hand No. 35

This is a California hand. The correspondent who sent it said that it had "caused end-

less discussion"—a thing which I can readily imagine:

♥ A K Q 8 2		
♣ Q		
♦ 8 5		
♠ A 9 8 7 4		
♥ 7 5 4	Y	♥ J 9 6
♣ A J 9 8 7	A B	♣ 10 6
♦ K J	Z	♦ A Q 3
♠ K J 2		♠ Q 10 6 5 3
♥ 10 3		
♣ K 5 4 3 2		
♦ 10 9 7 6 4 2		
♠ —		

It was the rubber-game and the score was 18-0 in favor of A-B. There were heavy penalties against Z-Y.

The original bidding was very unusual; it ran as follows:

Z, "a diamond." This was a grave error, and carried false information. I suppose Z hated to say "a spade," because he had none. To say "a spade" does n't mean that you hold spades (you would bid a "royal" under those circumstances); it means you have a wretched hand, and that is just what Z has. When he says "a diamond,"

he announces that he holds "a playable suit, headed by the ace or king, or (at a pinch) the queen." Y might have a stopper in each of the other suits and on his three stoppers and Z's announced suit he might go to no-trumps after a bid by A. If A said "two clubs," and Y stopped the clubs and said "two no-trumps," where would they be? Such a bid is too misleading for future bids and doubles.

I do not say Z could not take the odd in diamonds; he could. But he gives his partner false information regarding his hand, and that may make trouble in raises, doubles, or no-trump bids. Very few bids stop at one. Tell the truth in your bid. However—

Z, "a diamond."

A, "two clubs."

Y, "two diamonds."

B, "two royals."

Z and A, "by."

Y, "two no-trumps"—(fancy that, with a club singleton when A had bid clubs). My correspondent added that Y "lost a lot."

I should bid that hand as follows:

Z, "a spade."

A, "by." If A could take two-odd in clubs he should bid; his hand does n't look like two-odd to me; if every trump in his hand takes, and if

both his side-kings take, it is just the odd. And it would be an optimist who would expect such results.

Y, "a heart."

B, "by," because the odd in hearts, scored against him, is not very terrifying, considering the state of the game. Also, he has harvested good penalties which he does n't want to jeopardize.

If B bids "a royal," Z will say "two hearts," A, "two royals," Y, "three hearts," and it will close. If A bids clubs on the first round and if B raises the bid (which he should never do), they will lose.

If Z-Y are using nulos, they can do some excellent forcing. They can bid two *safe* nulos; and, as neither A nor B can see their hands, and as A, especially, would not care to play nulos, Z-Y could probably force A-B up in royals, and set them. Z-Y should bid nulos to three, in this hope.

Test-Hand No. 36

♥ Q J 6

♣ J

♦ J 8 7 6

♠ K J 8 6 5

♥ K 10 7

♣ A Q 9 7 6 5 3 2

♦ —

♠ 3 2

		Y	
A			B
		Z	

♥ 9 8 5 4 3 2

♣ K 10

♦ K Q 10 4 2

♠ —

♥ A

♣ 8 4

♦ A 9 5 3

♠ A Q 10 9 7 4

The score is 10-0 on the rubber-game in favor of Z-Y. And the situation offers a very pretty chance for clever flag-flying.

I could write forever on this hand and the bids it elicited. However, I will simply summarize.

One correspondent had A-B "fly the flag" up to "five clubs," which Z covered with "four royals," and closed the bidding.

Another had A go to "six clubs" to save rubber. Z doubled, naturally.

Another had B bid diamonds up to four,

which Z covered with "four royals,"—"to his undoing." A doubled, Z redoubled, and lost one trick.

A number of solutions closed the bidding at A's "five clubs," letting him "lose 50, less 24 honors." Others closed the bidding at "three royals."

Two very clever solutions that broke all rules came to me from two widely-separated points; they were identical. As I have said, I dislike tampering with the rules, except in very exceptional cases. However, this was done, not from carelessness, nor ignorance,—but after deep thought. This is the irregular bidding: Z, "a royal"; A, "two clubs"; Y, "two royals"; B, "three hearts" (because clubs are a poor suit on which to take game or to compete with royals, and no one has yet named hearts). After that, royals and hearts are bid against each other by all four players till the bid rests at "five hearts." One correspondent made this final,—and the other left it open whether Z should double, or bid "five royals."

CHAPTER XIII

DECISIONS

DURING the past year, many interesting questions have been referred to me for decision. In every case, it has been emphatically stated that my decision would be considered final. But as there were bets laid, in several cases, it seemed fairer to me, to have more than one opinion. Therefore, whenever it was a question of judgment rather than of fixed laws, I first made my own decision and then consulted two or three expert players. In every instance, the answers were identical. And also, in every instance, I have received the most courteous of letters, expressing absolute satisfaction in the decision,—even when it has been made *against* the writer.

Thinking some of these questions might interest my readers, I have chosen a few for publication here.

Query I

This came from Pueblo, Colorado. It was the first hand on the rubber-game. A-B were

about 700 ahead in penalties (that suggests some plunging to me).

The crosses in the diagram represent small cards. I give the hand just as it was sent to me,—with the original bidding:

♥	9 8		
♣	K 10 X X X		
♦	K 8 2		
♠	10 8 4		
♥	A 10 X X X	Y	♥ Q 5
♣	A J X	A	♣ 4
♦	A Q 10 X X	B	♦ J X X X X
♠	—	Z	♠ A Q X X X
♥	K J 7 4		
♣	Q 9 3 2		
♦	—		
♠	K J 9 7 4		

Z, "one spade."

A, "two diamonds."

Y and B, "pass."

Z, "two royals."

A, "three diamonds."

Y, "double."

B, "redouble."

Z, "three royals."

A, "four diamonds."

Y, "double."

B, "redouble."

Every one "pass."

Y's first lead was a small club and these were the questions I was asked to decide:

First.—Was Z's first bid correct, or should it have been "two royals"?

Second.—Was Z right in bidding "three royals" to take partner out of redouble?

Third.—Was Y justified in doubling the first time?

Fourth.—Was Y justified in doubling the second time?

Fifth.—Correct lead for Y.

As there were bets on the hand, I consulted several expert players to see if their views coincided with mine. They did. I will first make a few comments on the bidding, and then answer the questions.

It is what I should call "primitive" bidding; by that I mean that it is just the kind of bidding every one did when they first began to play Auction; I did it, too. We all bid our hands just as they looked to us; if they looked like three-odd, we bid three-odd, at a blow. We bid "a spade," to wait and see what would happen. We doubled high bids on general principles. We

doubled the only suit we could defeat; if the other side got out, we consoled ourselves by bidding our own suits against theirs (not realizing that we were taking but 6 or 8 a trick instead of the 50 we might have had). We paid no attention to penalties, to losing cards, to "warning"-bids from partners, to "raisers," to suit-help rather than trump-help—to anything that I consider a mark of good bidding. We thought of but three things: to bid our hand up to its top notch, to "cut out" bids from adversaries, and to make the best sense we could out of what the other three players said—even though we were all treading on rather vague footing.

Honestly, now, did n't we all use to bid in that way? Does n't every beginner bid in that way? The strange thing is that many otherwise faultless *players* still bid in that way.

The advent of the new count and the longer practice at the game have emphasized many points that we neglected at first. The result is the school of bidding that I have been upholding and explaining for nearly two years. Under its laws the bidding on the hand given would run as follows:

Z, "one royal." (We decided that "a spade" from Z was not open to fair criticism, but that "a royal" was infinitely better).

A, "two diamonds."

Y, "by"—he has two kings which he might consider "a trick and a raiser," but he has a very poor hand, and unless Z himself holds a "two-royal" hand they would stand to lose. If Z holds it, let him bid it.

Then every one should pass and the bidding would be closed.

The result is the same in either case—A plays the hand at diamonds. All that agonizing on the part of Z-Y was unnecessary, ridiculous, and expensive. They could n't stop results, and it cost them big money to try; the forcing-bids, the doubles and redoubles, the "rescue"-bids had just this result, that A's hand brought him 604 instead of 299. And that extra 305 was a gift from Z-Y.

You cannot stop the tide of events unless you have the proper equipment. You cannot "save rubber" unless you have the cards; flag-flying can be one of the most expensive amusements in the world.

A-B made five-odd in diamonds. They were bound to make it, and could bid their hands to that point without any risk. Z-Y had not cards enough to get the bid from them.

A-B should have scored five tricks at 7 each (35), plus 14 honors (28 minus chicane), plus

250 for rubber. Instead of which their five tricks were worth 28 apiece, and they got 100 points each for contract and extra trick.

Does n't it all make sense? Is n't it both safer and saner than so much plunging?

These, then, would be my answers to the five questions:

DECISION:—

First.—Z's best opening bid is "a royal." However, "a spade" was not open to criticism. He should certainly *not* say "two royals."

Second.—If I had been Z I should never have bid "three royals" to rescue Y from a redouble. Y knows Z's suit and has another chance to bid. Let him rescue himself or stay in.

Third.—Y's first double was distinctly bad.

Fourth.—So was his second.

Fifth.—Y's proper lead was the ten of spades to his partner's bid. He had no good lead of his own.

Query II

Z, the dealer, was playing a "three royal" hand; he held five spades to the ace-king, and some side-help. A (second hand) had doubled him, holding five small spades and considerable side-strength. Y (Dummy) held the jack and ten of spades, and B, of course, held the lone

queen. Z took it for granted that A, having doubled him, must hold the queen of trumps. The first lead was a side suit, and the trick was taken in Dummy. Then Z led Dummy's jack of trumps; as he did so, he said to A, "I am going to give you your queen," and detached the deuce from his own hand, so that it was visible to all the players. To his surprise B played the queen. Z then attempted to push the deuce back into his own hand, and it fell, face-up, on the table. He left it there and covered B's queen with his own king, taking the trick.

A "called" the deuce and claimed the trick both on the strength of the exposed card and that of the speech.

Z denied A's right to both the card and the trick, and the case was referred to me.

DECISION:—A's claim could not be sustained. The declarant can expose a card without suffering the penalty of having it called (see Chapter VIII, on Exposed Cards). And the speech, while a *serious breach against etiquette*, was likewise immune from punishment.

Query III

Z, the dealer, opened the bidding with "two spades." A said "a heart"; and Y (third-

hand), said "a no-trump,"—which Z, later, raised to "three no-trumps," and played the hand.

The hand should have been played by Y, as he was the original no-trump bidder. The error was not discovered till the sixth round.

Z made game and rubber; A-B then claimed that the hand should not stand, as rubber could not have been scored had Z's hand been exposed,—as it should have been.

DECISION:—The hand certainly stands. The original error was made by A-B, when the wrong player led. Any advantage that accrued to Z-Y was therefore the fault of A-B. Z-Y can certainly not be penalized (by being made to forfeit the hand), for an error of the adversary.

The moment all four players had played to the first trick, the opportunity for correcting the error was lost.

Query IV

The wrong adversary leads,—the ace of clubs. The declarant calls the card and demands that it be laid face up, upon the table. The proper leader then leads a small club, and the owner of the club-ace claims the right to play the ace and take the trick. This claim the declarant denies.

DECISION:—The claim is sustained. The declarant has the right to force an adversary to *play* an exposed card, but he has not the right to force him to *retain* such a card. (See Chapter VIII, on Exposed Cards.)

Query V

Are losses on a “one-spade” make limited to 100, if doubled by the opponent and not redoubled?

DECISION:—The losses on a “one-spade” make are always limited to 100.

Query VI

We had taken nine tricks, and then got three more on a revoke,—making twelve in all. Are we entitled to score 20 for little slam?

DECISION:—A slam can never be scored on a revoke.

Query VII

Toward the close of a hand, one of our adversaries led out of turn, and exposed the ace of diamonds. I was the Dummy, and my remaining diamonds, lying on the board, were the king and three small ones. The proper leader sat on my right; he immediately led the queen of

diamonds, through my king, and to the ace which his partner had shown. My partner put up the king, which was taken by the ace.

I claimed that they could not play the ace of diamonds after having so exposed it; I objected strenuously, but was overruled.

Was n't that hand practically dead? As we were ahead before this hand arose, did n't we win the game? Could we not call a suit from them?

DECISION:—No hand is dead because of an exposed card. No game can be taken because of such a card. Had it been the *original* lead, you should preferably have called a suit.

The ace of diamonds, in this case, should have been laid on the board. Then, when the other adversary led the queen of diamonds, *the declarant should have played a low diamond from Dummy, and should have called the ace on the queen.* This would have made the king good, and would have penalized the wrong lead and the improper advantage taken of that lead.

Query VIII

This came from Virginia; it is a matter, not of etiquette, but of judgment,—and it struck me as being very interesting.

The score was game-all, and love-all on the rubber. Z-Y were ahead in honors and penalties. Z dealt and bid "one royal"; A held these cards:

♥ K J 10 2
♣ K J
♦ A Q 6
♠ Q 10 5 2

He said "one no-trump," correctly, of course. Y bid "two royals," and B held this hand:

♥ Q 6 3
♣ Q 10 9 8 4 3 2
♦ 8 5
♠ 6

He bid "three clubs."

Then Z opened the second round with "three royals." A said "three no-trumps," played the hand, and was set. A discussion then arose as to B's call of "three clubs," which had caused his partner to venture on "three no-trumps."

The two questions put to me were:

First.—Should B have made that bid?

And, second.—Should A have gone up in no-trumps?

A three-bid is very high on a weak queen-suit, even with a side-singleton. It was evidently

prompted by A's no-trump bid. I should have hesitated to make it, and yet I think it absolutely warranted by the circumstances. It was more than allowable—it was even desirable. With both the adversaries bidding royals so freely, it looked as though they might well go rubber; and B's own hand held nothing to discount this belief. The point is here: *By bidding "three clubs," B positively denied a hand that could help no-trumps, and showed a hand that must be played in suit.*

He would greatly have preferred to say "two no-trumps," if possible. He didn't have to stop the royals to do this; his partner had already announced a royal-stopper. If B had held a long-established suit of clubs, he would have used it to raise the no-trump bid. He would have done this, even lacking side re-entry, because his partner must have at least one club to lead. No one bids no-trump with a blank suit.

Again, if B had held a long scattered suit of clubs headed by the ace, and some side re-entry in the shape of guarded honors, he would have chosen the no-trump bid without hesitation. Therefore, *his bid denied a hand that could help no-trump, proclaimed a hand that must be played in suit, denied a strong established club-suit,*

denied a scattered club-suit headed by the ace, backed by a side re-entry—and showed nothing but a hand whose one hope of saving rubber was to bid on a long, weak suit; the length of that suit would presuppose shortness in some other suit and hopes of a ruff. Ruffs and no-trumps are not synonymous.

Coming then to A, I consider his bid distinctly bad, and far more open to criticism than his partner's "three clubs." It showed less insight, less acumen in reading what B had striven to tell him. Of course, A wanted rubber, and rubber looked easier in no-trumps than in clubs.

But—A's stopper in spades was in a very precarious situation. Royals were being bid on both sides of him. It might well happen that the ace was on one side of him and the king on the other, and the jack might be anywhere.

He knew positively that B's club suit was not established, because he himself held the king-jack. Therefore, it must be long and weak, and B held no side-tricks or he would have said no-trumps. This marked three of the four aces and two of the four kings as being in the enemy's hands; five tricks, enough to set the bid. Of course, the club-ace might have been in B's hand.

Even then he had denied side re-entry, and A would have to overtake his own jack to get in.

There were then two aces and two kings against him—the adversaries' book. The clubs could not last forever, and the adversaries' royals would be established on the first few rounds. The moment clubs were finished and A started on another suit, the enemy would come in with one of those adverse kings or aces and would slide down the line with the remaining royals.

DECISION: This then would be my opinion of the situation:

I consider the three-club bid entirely warranted by the circumstances, and the three no-trump bid very poor. A should have played to defeat the royals, or at least to save game. He had an almost sure spade-trick, a club-trick, and a possible ruff, a diamond-trick, and a heart-trick. A much better hand to *save* game than to *go* game! And a chance to get back some of those lost penalties, rather than to let the adversaries pile up more!

CHAPTER XIV

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE GAME

THE human side of the game has two aspects; first, as regards one's self; and second, as regards the other three players at a table.

Every player should make it his aim to be thoroughly unselfish and thoughtful of the comfort of the others. He should rid himself of all annoying mannerisms. I know faultless players who render every game a burden. Some hum tunes under their breath; some keep up an incessant tattoo with their fingers, on the table; some close their cards in a tight little pack after each play, and have to run them all over every time they want a card; the cards should always be kept in a close fan-shape in the hands of the players. Some hold their cards too far away, and have constantly to be asked to hold them up. Some "snap" every card they play; this is as hard on the cards as it is on the nerves of the other players; cards should always be played as noiselessly as possible. Some cover the cards

with their hands, as they play them,—thus rendering it impossible to see them; all cards should be tossed or dropped. Some (these are women of course) always load the card-table with a mass of gold-bags, handkerchiefs, chains, vanity-cases, etc.,—which constantly jingle, and which take up room intended for other things. Some players are always trifling with the “still” pack of cards, so that there is no way of marking the deal. And many, many players are execrable winners and execrable losers.

Excessive slowness is maddening and unnecessary. You have to decide *sometime*; learn to do it with a fair degree of celerity. Any undue emphasis given to the play of a card, whether by manner, gesture, or speech, is an outrage against etiquette.

Constant explanation and discussion are wearing and unnecessary. Nobody is dying to know just *why* you did a certain thing,—and your explanations will rarely convince them of its correctness.

Not every one can play a faultless game; but every one is certainly capable of the highest degree of etiquette and courtesy,—and these two things go far towards making up for any lack of skill.

After attending to yourself, learn to study

all the persons with whom you play. Practice character-analysis. Auction is a combination of Whist and Poker,—that is what gives it its fascination; and it has been justly claimed that Poker, more than any other card-game, requires insight into human nature! In one respect, there is a wide difference between the two games; "bluff" will not go, in Auction, because every hand is played to the finish, and because you have a partner.

But you must study your partner and your adversaries. If you know a man is determined to play every hand, you can "force" the bid much more successfully than if you are playing against a man who is wise enough to "drop," and to leave you to play your forcing-bid. If you see a player is an inveterate bluffer, call his bluffs. If you realize that, although he knows his rules, he is given to breaking them, "just for this once," draw your own conclusions accordingly, and don't trust him as implicitly as you would a more conservative player; if your partner is ultra-conservative, take an occasional risk yourself—just to make a good average; if he is risky, stick to rock-bottom solidity in your own play. If luck is with you, gamble on it; if it is against you, never try to force it—limit your losses. Be reliable, be conservative, but don't be wooden.

But, after all, written instructions on this head are useless. Insight into human nature and the ability to cope with a given situation are inborn, acquired, or lacking. If acquired, actual experience is the only teacher. Printed matter will help you in your game, your rules, your choice of method. But it can never give you insight.

CHAPTER XV

AN AUCTION "BROMIDE"

THE favorite method of "damning with faint praise" in Auction is this: if a man's game does not suit you, you smile, shrug your shoulders, and say: "Oh, he plays *Bridge*, not *Auction!*"

This has become such an Auction "bromide" that I pray I may always be delivered from it. Nevertheless, this fact remains: if any one plays "Bridge not Auction," it is the preëmptive bidder. He has grasped one of Auction's potentialities,—the bid. He has utterly failed to grasp that even greater opportunity,—the penalty-field. The man who neglects this, is still playing Bridge,—Bid-Bridge!

CHAPTER XVI

LUCK

THERE is a prevalent superstition that "luck at cards" always evens up! To this I voice an emphatic dissent. *Why should card-luck be the only thing in the world, of which every one receives an equal share?* We all know that other things don't "even up,"—why then this?

I know that it does not. I know it by statistics, and by records kept for years, of the hands of various players.

There are proverbially good holders and proverbially bad ones. Luck may even up in life at large, but not necessarily in any one line. The old French proverb says, "Lucky at cards, unlucky in love." Some have luck in one line, some in another; the woman who is less beautiful may be more fascinating, or more lovable, or more clever (or she may not). But it would be manifestly absurd to say that all women have an equal share of that one gift, beauty, or that they will have it if they wait long enough.

Did any one ever claim that "beauty evens

up in the long run"? Or brains? Or charm? Why luck in cards, then? I believe that luck is as real as the nose on your face. And I think it is a distressing deterrent to the perfection of so scientific a game as Auction.

Does business-luck always "even up"? Leaving ability out of the question, are n't there some men to whom opportunities always come, and others who rarely have a chance? Of course there are! It is so well-recognized that we often hear it said of a certain man,—"Oh, he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth!"

Many persons who read this will insist that their "luck always evens up in the long run." That is because they are average holders; the eccentric holders, whether good or bad, will testify to the contrary. And, as in everything else, the average class greatly out-numbers the eccentric class; otherwise, the classes would be reversed!

Let me then repeat, if card-luck always "evened up," it would be the only thing in the entire Universe that did. And that, I think, would be a much greater phenomenon than that some players should generally hold good cards, and others should generally hold poor ones!

THE END.

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Together with an Exposition of

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